Gender lens on the Budget 2018–2019
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Key findings
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**Impact on young people**

**Recommendation 1**
NFAW recommends the introduction of mechanisms to support national youth policy, including a Minister for Youth and funding for a national voice for young people.

**Impact on Indigenous women**

**Recommendation 2**
NFAW recommends that Government commits to increased levels of consultation with Indigenous communities and leaders and greater attention to addressing their needs, implementing their stated proposals, acknowledging and utilising their knowledge and skills, and measuring outcomes they see as meaningful.

**Recommendation 3**
NFAW recommends that there is greater transparency in how Indigenous funds are allocated and spent.

**Recommendation 4**
NFAW recommends that a more holistic approach is taken to addressing Indigenous disadvantage. Specifically, for Indigenous health, the gap will never be closed unless and until the social determinants of health are addressed.

**Recommendation 5**
NFAW recommends that there are stated national targets to reducing homelessness, improving the quality of housing, and reducing rates of incarceration - together with appropriate resourcing and programs to achieve these.

**Recommendation 6**
NFAW recommends that more attention is paid to ensure cultural safety for Indigenous people working in and accessing mainstream services.

**Recommendation 7**
NFAW recommends that the Government works towards the delivery of a constitutionally enshrined First Nations Voice as outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

**Impact on migrant and refugee women**

**Recommendation 8**
NFAW recommends that the implementation of the mainstream budget measures impacting on women’s safety; women’s health and wellbeing, and women’s economic capability provides a dedicated focus and expenditure to ensure tangible positive outcomes for migrant and refugee women.

**Recommendation 9**
NFAW recommends that the proposed extension of the waiting period for newly settled migrants be abolished as measures that would entrench migrant women’s economic disadvantage and jeopardise the wellbeing of a substantial proportion of Australia’s children.

**Recommendation 10**
As a priority, NFAW recommends that that the Government fund special measures to implement the recommendations of the UN Committees for Human Rights Conventions to Australian governments, to ensure that women from marginalised groups have priority for accessible housing and access to Disability Employment Services.

**Revenue measures**

**Recommendation 11**
NFAW recommends that the LITO and the LIMTO be converted to a transfer payment available to low and middle-income earners in conjunction with other payments, instead of being delivered to low and middle-income taxpayers through the tax system.
Recommendation 12
NFAW recommends that, because the second and third stages of the personal income tax plan are regressive, they should not proceed.

Recommendations 13
NFAW recommends that bracket creep should be addressed by reviewing the tax rate thresholds.

Superannuation

Recommendation 14
NFAW recommends that detailed analysis be undertaken to understand the gender impact of the Budget 2018-19 income tax changes on superannuation tax.

Recommendation 15
NFAW recommends that further funding be provided to the ATO to monitor and prosecute superannuation non-compliance.

Recommendation 16
NFAW recommends that the $450 per month earnings threshold for Superannuation Guarantee payments be removed.

Recommendation 17
NFAW recommends that the Superannuation Guarantee be paid by the Government on its Paid Parental Leave scheme.

Payment integrity and adequacy

Recommendation 18
NFAW recommends that the Government index working age payments to movements in wages.

Recommendation 19
NFAW recommends that the Government increase the level of Commonwealth rent assistance.

Recommendation 20
NFAW recommends that the Government reinstate the budget table outlining projected changes to real disposable incomes and net tax thresholds of different household types, formally contained in Appendix C of the Budget overview.

Housing and homelessness

Recommendation 21
NFAW recommends that a comprehensive gender-responsive national housing strategy is developed. An effective national strategy should set ambitious goals to reduce homelessness and increase affordable housing stock. Such a strategy should also tackle the policy incongruities that plague current policy settings. A gender-responsive strategy would include the principles of visibility, capability and accountability. Visibility ensures that women in their diversity are named and included. Capability ensures that housing systems are adequately resourced to meet the housing needs of women in their diversity. And accountability would ensure that such a policy included gender indicators in the performance framework. Australia should seek guidance from Canada’s National Housing Strategy, which has quarantined 25% of its funding for projects and services that directly address the needs of women and their families (Government of Canada, 2018, p.11).

The key components of a national strategy should:

- reform tax settings to curb negative gearing and reduce the capital gains tax exemption;
- improve Commonwealth Rent Assistance to better meet the needs of renters;
- increase capital funding through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement;
- ensure long-term, sustainable and certain funding for remote housing;
- determine and implement a public subsidy and/or direct government investment to support the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation.
Child care

Recommendation 22
NFAW recommends that the federal government amend its “Jobs for Families, Child Care Package” to ensure every child, irrespective of their parents’ work circumstances receive access to at least two days (24 hours) of subsidised early learning a week. This maintains continuous access to early learning and care for all children, especially those from vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds and provides certainty for parents, in particular mothers, who even if they experience a sudden or significant change in their working or earning capacity, know they will always be able to count on access to two full days of subsidised childcare.

Early education and schools

Recommendation 23
NFAW recommends that Funding for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education becomes an integral part of school funding.

Vocational education and training

Recommendation 24
The Government should clarify the reasons why there has been no funding allocated through the Skilling Australians Fund, and that the budget allocations be used to support vocational education and training opportunities this year. This should include increased programs for women and girls, including in skills shortage areas.

Recommendation 25
The Government should allocate sufficient funding to the states and territories to address the serious decline in student enrolments in VET. According to the Mitchell Institute (2018), if the ongoing decline in student enrolments is not reversed, VET will become a residual sector by 2031.

Recommendation 26
The Government recognise and act on the significant role of TAFE in delivering a range of programs for women and girls.

Recommendation 27
The Government and the Assistant Minister should address continuing concerns about the discriminatory outcomes resulting from its approach to funding skills training focused on apprenticeships and skills shortages, without any positive funding intervention to redress the sex segregation entrenched in many industries.

Higher education

Recommendation 28
NFAW recommends that the Government recognise the difficulties facing low SES and minority students from all locations, and extend the benefit currently reserved for rural and regional students to students living in the metropolitan interface and disadvantaged areas.

Recommendation 29
NFAW recommends that the Government recognise the importance of quality teaching in supporting all students to make the transition from school or further education to higher education and re-establish funding for research into university teaching and professional development for university teaching staff.

Recommendation 30
NFAW recommends that the Government end the freeze on recurrent funding in order to reduce dependency on casual teaching staff.
**Employment programs**

**Recommendation 31**
NFAW recommends that JobActive parameters applying to new and single mothers be re-examined and redesigned to deliver a better ‘mutual obligation’ fit between their family responsibilities, their welfare reliance, and their long term economic security.

**Workforce programs**

**Recommendation 32**
NFAW recommends that the Government provide additional funding to the Fair Work Ombudsmen to allow it to address high levels of non-compliance with basic workplace standards, noting with the FWO that ‘these behaviours create barriers to workforce participation, weaken the integrity of the workplace relations system, distort the labour market and undermine the principles of fair competition’ (FWO, Corporate Plan 2017-18).

**Recommendation 33**
NFAW strongly urges the Government to restore the funding of the five Working Women’s Centres in its forthcoming September Statement on Women’s Economic Security.

**Women in STEM**

**Recommendation 34**
NFAW recommends that co-ordination between portfolios – such as education, employment and innovation – be formalised and strengthened to ensure gender responsive policies and joint programs.

**Recommendation 35**
All Australian education and training ministers introduce career guidance that promotes online role models and provides gender aware career information for family members.

**Recommendation 36**
A National Career Guidance Strategy be developed that addresses participation of women in STEM, non-traditional careers and industries and develops models of best practice career guidance.

**Recommendation 37**
An integrated strategy be developed for secondary school girls aimed at increasing representation and retention of women in non-traditional roles.

**Recommendation 38**
The Workplace Gender Equality Agency be tasked with, and funded to, further develop partnerships between stakeholders including educational institutions and industry bodies, to establish and foster career pathways across a range of non-traditional sectors.

**Recommendation 39**
The Department of Education and Training undertake a national evaluation of all programs and initiatives associated with increasing numbers of girls in STEM education, to provide benchmark data and best practice guidelines.

**Women’s workforce participation**

**Recommendation 40**
NFAW recommends that government examine the issues of job design and skills development in the disability sector, with a view to reducing turnover in the sector and improving outcomes for employees and their clients.

**Recommendation 41**
NFAW looks forward to seeing the full implementation of the Government’s commitment to make a ‘significant improvement’ to employment services by undertaking and implementing a gender analysis. We recommend that ParentsNext be among the programs redesigned as a result of such analysis.

**Recommendation 42**
NFAW urges the Government to commit itself to fund a recurrent Time Use Survey.
Recommendation 43
NFAW recommends that the Government adopt measures to address the undervaluation of work in the caring sector on which it partly relies to make savings to fund its other priorities. In particular, we recommend that it reinstate the $300m Budget measure to support child care and the $1.5b measure to fund pay rises for aged care workers, and examine similar measures to support job design and earnings in the disability care sector.

Health

Recommendation 44
NFAW recommends that the Government should reverse fully the Medicare freeze and increase the Medicare Rebate by $2.50 for a standard consultation.

Recommendation 45
NFAW recommends that the Government should develop a new National Women’s Health Policy 2020 to address the specific health issues facing women.

Recommendation 46
NFAW recommends that, in accordance with WHO recommendations, the Government should review all health policies and programs for their impact on health inequality.

Recommendation 47
NFAW recommends that the Government should ensure that all necessary support is provided to secure the 2023 women’s world cup for Australia.

Mental health

Recommendation 48
NFAW recommends that mental health funding reflects the burden of illness and is effectively targeted to those population groups most in need. It should be better integrated within primary care.

Recommendation 49
NFAW recommends that the specific needs of women across the lifespan should be considered.

Recommendation 50
While the efforts to address gaps in services (the provision of after-care services for those who have attempted suicide and of mental health services for those in aged care) are commended, NFAW notes that every effort must be made to ensure that these are appropriately expanded and made sustainable over time.

Recommendation 51
A more strategic approach needs to be adopted to mental health policy and program development, funding, implementation evaluation and feedback. Within a culture of innovation, a more long-term vision and a more sustainable approach is required to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians.

Pensions

Recommendation 52
NFAW recommends that the Government review the rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Aged care

Recommendation 53
NFAW recommends that the Government undertake a review of age care demand and funding to provide greater certainty to the sector and users about the future of aged care service provision. This should include meeting the mental health care needs of residents increasingly suffering dementia and supporting Australians to stay in their homes through properly funded home care packages.

Recommendation 54
NFAW recommends that the Government develop an aged care sustainable funding model.
**Recommendation 55**
NFAW recommends that the Government introduce an aged care workforce plan, including addressing growing casualisation and pay equity.

**Eliminating violence against women**

**Recommendation 56**
NFAW recommends Individuals and community organisations concerned about progress in achieving significant and sustained reductions in violence against women through the national plan, seek assurances of commitment from their local MP and/or Senators.

**Recommendation 57**
NFAW recommends Community organisations and women’s groups asked to participate in consultations on the Fourth Action Plan seek assurance, prior to participating, that the Fourth Action Plan will be designed and funded to deliver a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women, with each policy/program element being justified on the logic of its contribution.

**Recommendation 58**
NFAW recommends Individuals and organisations across Australia support the call from Fair Agenda, Domestic Violence NSW, National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum, No to Violence and NACLC for the Commonwealth Government to provide sufficient resources to drive national action to keep women safe.

**Recommendation 59**
NFAW recommends The Australian Government match the Victorian Government’s $1.9 billion funding commitment as the best indicator of the quantum of funding required over the period of the Fourth Action Plan to achieve significant improvements in women’s safety.

**Recommendation 60**
NFAW recommends that, if the Government considers that the information and evidence needed to develop a fully costed and effective national strategy to support the Fourth Action Plan is not available, then it should follow the approach taken by the Victorian Government and hold a Commonwealth Royal Commission into reducing domestic violence and sexual assault.

**Recommendation 61**
That the Parliament support the treatment of non-consensual sharing of intimate images as a criminal matter.

**Recommendation 62**
That the Government progress the Family Law Amendment (Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties) Bill 2017 as a matter of urgent priority.

**Recommendation 63**
That consideration be given to funding the implementation of core recommendations from the Parliamentary Inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence prior to the completion of the ALRC Family Law Review.

**Recommendation 64**
That the Family Law Amendment (Parenting Management Hearings) Bill be suspended until such time as the ALRC has had the opportunity to examine the proposal further as part of its Family Law Review, and that funding previously allocated to Parenting Management Hearings in the 2017-18 Budget be redistributed to help address the backlog in the Courts.

**Community Legal Centres**

**Recommendation 65**
NFAW recommends that a sustainable, long term funding model be developed for the post-2020 national partnership agreement to ensure increased access to legal services for those in need.

**International Development**

**Recommendation 66**
NFAW recommends that the Government Reverse cuts to the development budget and recommit to reaching, in the first instance, 0.5% GNI; moving to 0.7% GNI, in-line with international targets.
Recommendation 67
NFAW recommends that the Government Address the persistent inability to meet the gender equality performance target by

a. Setting spending targets for principal and significant gender equality investments in the Australian Aid program

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<thead>
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<td>Principal investment (against DAC criteria)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant investment (against DAC criteria)</td>
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<td>80%</td>
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b. Setting a standalone target for funding to women’s rights organisations

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<td>$15 million</td>
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c. Introducing strategies to reduce the proportion of unscreened aid for gender equality objectives aid.

Recommendation 68
NFAW recommends that the Government Strengthen the senior leadership accountability mechanisms for gender equality targets at DFAT, as per the Performance of Australian Aid 2016-2017 Report.

Recommendation 69
NFAW recommends that the Government Strengthen public accountability and transparency approaches, including

i) the presentation by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of an Annual Gender Equality Report to Parliament

ii) the integration of gender equality spending targets and data into budget and public accountability documents

iii) increasing in the country-by-country accountability for gender equality targets in the Performance of Australian Aid Report, particularly in the Pacific.

Recommendation 70
NFAW recommends that the Government Increase family planning to $AU 50 million per year. This would bring funding for family planning in line with the commitment made by the previous Australian Government at the Family Planning 2020 Summit in 2012.

Recommendation 71
NFAW recommends that the Government Fund Australia’s foreign affairs and trade portfolio to undertake systematic analysis of women’s rights within Australia’s trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties, and use management and public accountability mechanisms to ensure they are undertaken.

Recommendation 72
NFAW recommends that the Government Ensure diplomatic posts report annually on their work to promote gender equality and the results they achieved. In addition, the Government should share the progress it has made on its Women in Leadership Strategy to increase the proportion of women in senior positions.
INTRODUCTION

Budget 2018-19 is not a great Budget for Women.

That said, it is the first Budget for some time when there have been two women (Sen. Michaelia Cash and Kelly O’Dwyer) members of the Expenditure Review Committee, and where the Minister for Women (O’Dwyer) is an avowed feminist and has expressly required the Office for Women to assist her in her role on the ERC.

Experience has taught me that sometimes as much work can go into preventing or subverting initiatives (expenditures or savings) in the ERC which might be hostile to women as goes into achieving positive measures for women.

So many initiatives which we consider might be of positive benefit for women are not in this Budget.

There remain however notwithstanding some individually beneficial measures (cf. changes to superannuation) not a few measures which will be desperately bad for women -- consider the proposal to garnishee welfare payments of beneficiaries who have unpaid fines ... consider the rate at which this will impact Indigenous women, who already crowd our jails on non-payment of fines, or on women with intellectual disabilities.

Other measures have both beneficial and disincentive elements: Measures that reduce the tax payable by low income earners will disproportionately benefit women, as 85% of female taxpayers earn less than $90,000 compared to 72% of male taxpayers (ATO, 2018).

However the tax offset increases the effective marginal tax rate by 1.5% for taxpayers within the taper zone, which increases work disincentives for women and other low-income taxpayers. The potential to increase workforce participation by part time workers through a lower tax rate is therefore moderated by the effect of the taper rate.

We noted the Budget Statement circulated by Minister O’Dwyer. We noted also her statement shortly before the Budget that we might expect a September Statement from her on measures to enhance women’s economic security. We understand that funds are in the budget for this Statement, even though its shape is not yet settled.
See table below: could this contain elements of the war chest for women?

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<td>Decisions taken but</td>
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In the spirit of helpfulness, our budget analysts have put together some proposals for Minister O’Dwyer to consider for the September statement. We would be delighted to work collaboratively with her to progress some of these.

At the top of our concerns is the total absence of effective policy and program responses to make housing more affordable and accessible. This affects the effectiveness of extending home care for the aged, crisis services for women and children impacted by domestic violence (especially Indigenous women), people’s ability to benefit from the NDIS- and their capacity to live while in receipt of Newstart - the problems are vast. Families, young adults, children, homeless women, are living in appalling poverty because of housing policy failure. No woman can be economically secure without affordable accessible housing.

Some specific initiatives for consideration in the September statement I have set out below. We commend them to the Minister.

**Recommendation**

NFAW recommends that a comprehensive gender-responsive national housing strategy be developed, as set out in our full list of recommendations. As a matter of urgency, we recommend that interim funding be provided to:

- increase the level of Commonwealth Rent Assistance to better meet the needs of renters;
- increase capital available through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement;
- increase and maintain the availability of remote housing; and
- support the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation.

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1 *Table 2: Expense measures since the 2017-18 MYEFO*
2 *Table 1: Revenue measures since the 2017-18 MYEFO*
**Recommendation**

NFAW recommends that the Australian Government match the Victorian Government’s $1.9 billion funding commitment as the best indicator of the quantum of funding required over the period of the Fourth Action Plan to achieve significant improvements in women’s safety.

**Recommendation**

NFAW recommends that the Government provide additional funding to the Fair Work Ombudsmen to allow it to address high levels of non-compliance with basic workplace standards.

**Recommendation**

NFAW strongly urges the Government to restore the funding of the five Working Women’s Centres.

**Recommendation**

NFAW urges the Government to commit itself to fund a recurrent Time Use Survey.

**Recommendation**

NFAW recommends that in its funding decisions and priorities the Government recognise and act on the significant role of TAFE in delivering a range of programs for women and girls.
NET IMPACT ON WOMEN

Gender based analysis identifies the ways in which public policies affect men and women differently. It does so through the systematic use of data to better tailor the development of government programs.

Since 2014 there has been no Women’s Budget Statement. This year the Australian Government has again produced material that highlights budget measures of interest to women, its 2018 Budget statement ‘Women’s Economic Capability and Leadership’.

This analysis of how women benefitted from this year’s budget is not a gender-based analysis. It is a listing of initiatives that may benefit women, minus any data. However, the Minister for Women has announced that a ‘significant funding’ package to address the economic disadvantage many Australian women face, is to be released in September. The analysis of budget initiatives in this year’s Gender Lens, therefore also contains an indication of what NFAW believes should be addressed in the government’s Women’s Economic Security Statement.

The 2018-19 Budget papers show revenue of just under $3b over three years as ‘decisions taken but not yet announced’, presumably funded by abolition of tax avoidance measures. NFAW’s analysis will include measures that could draw on this allocation as the basis for key investments in areas such as domestic violence.

The federal budget is the most important policy statement of the government. Fiscal policy is based on the market economy, and ignores women’s unpaid labour in the household, in particular caring work for young and old, and the extent to which it limits their work in the market economy and therefore economic security and empowerment over the life course. Measures such as equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws can contribute to alleviate inequality, but a broad policy approach to rethinking the work and care rewards and incentives in our current system is necessary.

Government budgets are meant to be gender neutral but in fact they are largely gender biased because they do not assess how policies affect women. Gender budgeting identifies policies that are unequal at the systemic level, as well as opportunities to spend money on helping women and which have a high return. For example, the budget net operating and capital expense reporting treats spending on infrastructure as an investment, even when the financial returns are implausible, but spending on social infrastructure, such as child care or vaccines, as a cost. Yet such spending increases productivity and growth for current and future generations, partly by increasing the number of women in the workforce (Elson, 2017).
How did women fare in the 2018-19 Budget?

A return to surplus, together with modest, targeted tax offsets for low and middle-income earners next year, and a substantial aged care package for older Australians with many welcome elements, are mostly positives for women. However, this is based on optimistic assumptions and cyclical bumps including commodity prices, as well as excessively constrained spending, and not on reformed and sustainable fiscal policy.

Median taxable income in 2015-16 for women was $48,690 compared to $63,430 for men. The Low and Medium Income Tax Offset proposed for next year would assist a large number of low to middle income Australians in the short term.

However, the offset mechanism is ‘a retrograde piece of policy design that adds complexity to the system’ (Irvine, 2018). As a result of the phase out over higher incomes, the LIMTO increases disincentives to work, particularly for part-time working women. It is not accompanied by a broader base; the Henry Review proposed abolishing the Low-Income Tax Offset because of complexity.

There are two further stages of proposed personal income tax changes as well as retention of the company tax cut package.

However, stages two and three of the tax cuts, together with the proposed unpopular company tax cuts, are rejected by NFAW. The proposed flattening of the tax rates reduces the progressivity of the tax system and represents a major and inequitable turning point. The government argues that these changes address bracket creep, are simpler and improve incentives to increase earnings.

Bracket creep can be addressed through changes to thresholds, not the applicable tax rates. NFAW disputes the assertion that the package addresses the need to remove bracket creep. A larger impact on incentives to increase work hours and earnings would be made through addressing the high effective marginal tax rates as a result of the interaction of the tax system with payments such as child care, Family Tax Benefit and HECS. Men and women’s decisions about labour supply are generally different.
Many women’s decisions about paid work are far more sensitive, largely because of caring responsibilities. That is female labour supply is relatively elastic compared to men’s. On the other hand, the evidence suggests men’s labour force behaviour is largely unaffected by moving to higher marginal rates. NFAW, and many others, have drawn attention to the fact that for many women decisions to enter the paid work force are negatively affected by these interactions.

Spending growth is projected to average just 1.1% in real terms over three years, compared to 2.1% average growth in real terms over the government’s two terms in office. That is, we could experience severe austerity. Greg Jericho (2018) has pointed out that flatter taxes are not about cutting taxes but about cutting services and welfare. The tax cuts will reduce revenue by billions. Publicly funded services will take a hit, with the potential to reduce jobs. Only spending on schools and the NDIS will grow in real terms. This is of major concern. Women are over-represented at lower income levels. Changes to government benefits and services affect them disproportionally.

Aged care is an important issue for women as users, as workers providing services and as informal carers. The sector receives a considerable boost, up from $18b a year to $23 billion over four years. Elements of the package are welcomed, including improvements to My Aged Care processes; the introduction of quality assurance processes; the establishment of a Quality and Safety Commission; mental health trials for residents in aged care suffering social isolation or loneliness; money to address elder abuse; extra funding for palliative care; extra funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flexible aged care; and a trial introducing consumer centred funding, similar to the NDIS.

The centrepiece of the package is 14000 extra home care packages at a cost of $1.6b. Women currently receive two thirds of home care packages. However, over 100 000 aged Australians are already on the waiting lists. The increased expenditure for this item also appears to be redirected from an underspend in residential aged care, where women also make up two thirds of residents.

The budget does little in areas such as domestic violence, pay equity, housing, assistance to the marginalised - no increase in Newstart or Commonwealth rent assistance - the environment, health promotion and prevention. There are no longer-term structural approaches to reforms that are required to meet government services needs over the long term.

NFAW welcomes the commitment by the government to produce a Statement on Women’s Economic Security in September. There are substantial policy measures that can be taken to improve current policy settings to support gender equality. However, with limited fiscal resources available in a tax cut environment, the women’s statement in September will face many challenges.
References

Greg Jericho (2018), ‘The flat tax is really about cutting services not taxes’, The Guardian, 10 May
https://www.theguardian.com/business/rogonomics/2018/may/10/the-flat-tax-is-really-about-cutting-services-not-taxes


IMPACT ON YOUNG WOMEN

The Budget contains some positive measures for young women in a range of areas but fails to address some of the major issues facing this cohort, including unemployment and under-employment, housing affordability and gender-based violence.

The Australian Government has announced a range of reforms to superannuation, including a cap on passive fees charged by superannuation funds on account balances below $6,000, strengthening the Australian Tax Office consolidation regime for inactive superannuation accounts with low balances, and changing insurance to opt-in for members under the age of 25 and with low balances. These are positive measures which will benefit young women, who are likely to have multiple superannuation accounts and low superannuation balances, assisting them to reduce fees paid on their superannuation savings. The average superannuation balance for women aged 20 to 24 years is $5,022 ($902 less than the average balance for men in the same age bracket) (ASFA, 2017).

The combined $338.1 million investment in mental health is also positive. Mission Australia has found that one in four young people are at risk of serious mental illness, and the risk is greater in Indigenous groups and among young women (Mission Australia, 2017).

Further support for young people who are studying is welcome, including changes to ABSTUDY and increased accessibility to Youth Allowance for rural young people studying away from home. However, the Government is extending its measure regarding student payments so that eligibility for student payments is dependent on a student studying a higher education course with eligibility for the Higher Education Loan program, which will restrict access to support for some young people. Funding for additional places at regional universities is a positive measure which will benefit young women in rural and regional Australia. The Government’s $4.5 million package to encourage more girls and women to study and undertake STEM careers is also a positive investment.

Harsh social security measures in this budget will make life more difficult for young people who are studying or unemployed, including the continuation of the debt recovery program and a new ability for the Commonwealth to make compulsory deductions from welfare payments for those who owe state or territory court-imposed fines. These measures further stigmatise people accessing the social safety net.

The Budget allocates a small sum ($700,000) to the Brotherhood of St Laurence to establish a Youth Employment Body to research and promote best practice in youth employment service models. While this is a positive measure, this small investment falls short of what is required to lower youth unemployment and ensure that young women have access to secure employment.
The youth unemployment rate is currently 13.4% overall and 12.3% for young women aged 15-24, compared to an unemployment rate of 5.5% for the total population (ABS, March 2018). The casualisation of the workforce, high rates of under-employment, the increase in the gig economy and increasing unpaid internships make it difficult for young people to find steady, secure employment with access to paid leave and superannuation (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2017). This situation inhibits the financial security of young women.

The extended funding for DV-Alert and 1800 RESPECT provided for in the Budget are important measures for supporting women who have experienced violence. Sustained funding is required for domestic, family and sexual violence services to ensure that all women who experience violence have access to assistance and support. In Australia, women aged 18 to 24 are at the highest risk of experiencing sexual violence compared to women in older age groups and men. Data from the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey found that approximately one in 20 women in this age group reported experiencing sexual assault in the last 12 months (ABS, 2017). Young women also have the highest rate of assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services, with domestic, family and sexual violence cited as the main reasons for needing help (Homelessness Australia, 2016). This indicates the importance of housing as a key component of responses to violence against women.

The Budget also includes funding to support the Office of the eSafety Commissioner’s new functions including a civil penalty regime to combat the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and support to Australians who experience online abuse. This is positive for young women; research has shown that 24% of young women aged 18-24 have had a nude or sexual photo/video posted online or sent on without their consent (Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2017).

The short-term tax cuts will positively benefit young women on low to middle incomes, but not those who earn below the tax-free threshold. However, in the long-term, the proposed tax cuts will result in a flattening of the tax system, benefiting those on high incomes (more likely to be men) and reducing revenue available for services.

Further, the Government has retained its measure from the 2017-18 MYEFO to reduce the minimum repayment threshold for the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) from $55,874 to $45,000. This will mean that while young women with student debt may benefit from income tax cuts, those who earn between the new and the old repayment threshold will at the same time be required to begin paying off their HELP debt. The reduction of the HELP repayment threshold will disproportionately affect women, who earn less over a lifetime of employment. The gender pay gap is apparent even at graduation - the
average gap for recent graduates is 9.4% favouring men; the gender pay gap for some study areas is substantially higher (WGEA, 2017 and WGEA, 2018).

Organisations representing young people, including the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC, 2018) and Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN, 2018) have said that this budget has been a missed opportunity for the Government to invest in Australian youth. The budget does not increase Newstart and Youth Allowance payments; there are limited measures to address youth unemployment, including a lack of measures to provide better access to vocational education or stimulate job creation; there is limited funding to address violence against women, beyond existing measures which have been criticised for being inadequate (Fair Agenda, 2018); and finally there are no measures to address the crisis of homelessness and lack of housing affordability.

The Australian Government has not had a Minister for Youth to lead government policy for young people since 2013, and has failed to fund a national voice for young people. NFAW again emphasises the importance of coordinated government policy for young Australians, in combination with gendered budgeting, to ensure that young women are not left behind by government policy.

**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 1**

- NFAW recommends the introduction of mechanisms to support national youth policy, including a Minister for Youth and funding for a national voice for young people.

**References**


http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4906.0~2016~Main%20Features~Key%20Findings~1

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ayac/pages/59/attachments/original/1525777492/Budget_Blindspot_-_AYAC_Media_Release_8_5_2018.pdf?1525777492


IMPACT ON OLDER WOMEN

The clearest impact of this budget in relation to older women is this: for women home owners, there are potential benefits. For women who don’t own their home, there are few if any measures of potential assistance.

Starting with the main potential benefit: 14,000 extra aged care in the home packages worth $1.6billion are provided. These packages will be allocated to some of those people eligible for high care, that is, to a relatively modest proportion of them. The waiting list for these packages is more than 100,000. There is no news about how long those in need and assessed as eligible will have to wait.

Women with insecure accommodation or homeless will have no opportunity to receive such a package. To receive home care services, you need a home where they can be delivered. It seems the 14,000 packages will be funded by shifting funds from the residential aged care program.

The contradiction here is that if older women need home care, but are left without it over a period, their health may deteriorate to the point when they may be assessed as eligible for residential care. This care costs the Commonwealth twice as much as home-based care. When this happens there are no savings, only additional budget costs. Residential care is currently not overprovided, and the system is dealing with scandals and poor practice, which will cost to remediate.

Extension of the Pension Loan scheme to all age pensioners and self-funded retirees potentially assists those who own a home and could take a loan against it to receive an income stream to add their pension, capped to provide 150% of the pension. The scheme is run by the Commonwealth Department of Human Services. The interest rate is fair. The cap means that only part of the equity would be drawn down, so substantial equity remains with the owner.

The risks here in contrast to perceived risks with commercial reverse mortgage loans are low. This loan arrangement would suit those who own a home and can manage such a loan. Again, for those with no home to provide the loan, there is no assistance. Pensioners who must rent are the poorest and most vulnerable to homelessness. The pensioner rent allowance was not increased. No action was taken to improve the supply of affordable rental housing.

Again assisting pensioners who have substantial assets, from July 2019, for those pensioners who are able and wish to invest in annuities, or “pooled income streams”, only 60% of payments from such schemes will be assessed as income and assets in relation to eligibility for the age pension. This measure has no relevance to the very poor living on Newstart or the age pension only and forced to rent.
For older women still attached to the workforce new assistance for midlife retraining could assist them to return to the workforce after caring for a family member, or being sacked, or to get their skills updated to keep or gain a job. If such women cannot secure stable employment, they will have to live on Newstart until they reach 65 and 6 months, the current eligibility point for age precision. Living for 10 years on Newstart and inadequate rent allowance would reduce many of these women to homelessness and mental illness.

An employer subsidy of $10,000 to employ older people may be used to encourage hiring of older women.

Personal income tax cuts will provide those earning up to $90,000, between four and 10 dollars per week. This tax rebate, when it comes, would assist those employed women with low to middle incomes.

The increase in the threshold of part-time earnings by pensioners before pension reduction starts, up to $17,800 without impacting on the pension, will assist those older female pensioners who are able to get some casual work.

The abolition of superannuation exit fees will assist older women who have some super.

Support for older people establishing start-up businesses may assist some older women with suitable skills and background.

Funds for Indigenous housing in remote areas of the Northern Territory should benefit some older Indigenous women.

New mental health support for older people in residential care, $82.5m over four years, may assist women where the services are provided.

The most glaring omission is the absence of measures to increase affordable accommodation for older women. The growth in homelessness and insecure accommodation amongst older women has been extensively documented and is already estimated to be some hundreds of thousands. Advocates and providers had been hoping for federal initiatives to replace the National Rental Affordability Scheme, NRAS, and a strategy to partner with states to significantly increase funds available for social and community housing for older women. This did not happen.
Another major omission is the absence of a national plan to develop an appropriately trained and paid age care workforce in large enough numbers to meet the dramatic growth in aged care services.

The proposed seven-year reduction of personal income tax for high earners will reduce revenue available to meet health and care needs of growing cohorts of older people.
IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Winners

• Rangers who will have job security for the next three years.
• Indigenous women living in remote areas who will be able to access Medicare-funded dialysis services without the need to travel.
• Those students and their schools who will benefit under ABSTUDY reforms.
• Older Indigenous women who can access the newly provided aged care places and reforms.

Losers

• The 18% of Indigenous households living in houses of an unacceptable standard.
• Indigenous women unable to escape domestic violence because there is no safe housing available.
• Already disadvantaged Indigenous women who lose welfare income as a result of punitive Government measures.
• Indigenous women who are at risk of incarceration and need access to affordable legal services.

At a time when the Australian Government’s Closing the Gap efforts are seen to be faltering, there is little in this budget to change that. Indigenous leadership has been scathing in response, stating that

“the Federal Budget has once again failed to significantly address many of the key concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations, and peoples. First Peoples have come last. The Government’s priority for First Australians focuses primarily on economic prosperity. While many would welcome this outcome, the Government’s roadmap to accomplishing this prosperity is fanciful, incoherent and sorely lacking in the detail necessary for success” (National Congress, 2018).

In particular, there are concerns that the Government’s “callous disregard” for Indigenous peoples’ basic human rights to equality and quality health, education, housing and employment will exacerbate current problems including high rates of incarceration and removal of children from their families.

Perhaps most disheartening is the Budget evidence that, yet again, the Government has failed to engage in serious consultation and to listen to the voices and expertise of Indigenous peoples.

The Prime Minister’s 2018 Report on Closing the Gap states the obvious: “There is a shared view among governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider community that we need to do better” (PM&C, 2018a).
Four of the existing Closing the Gap targets expire in 2018. Efforts are currently underway to “refresh” the Closing the Gap agenda: we can only hope that these inject new vigour and commitment into the Government’s efforts (PM&C, 2018b).

At the same time, changes must be made to the way that Indigenous funding is distributed and evaluated. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet has yet to respond effectively to strong criticism about the establishment and implementation of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (ANAO, 2017) and very recently a report for the Lowitja Institute has called for sweeping reforms to evaluation of Indigenous programs to better meet the needs of communities and follow the principles of ethical research (Croakey, 2018).

The Budget

Nowhere in the budget papers is the total spending on Indigenous Affairs or the Indigenous Advancement Strategy administered by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet provided. The spending for Indigenous health administered by the Department of Health is provided (Budget Paper No. 1, Table 8), as is the Assistance for Indigenous Australians (nec) (Budget Paper No. 1, Table 9). What is in this latter category is not clear but likely includes programs relating to Indigenous economic development, housing, infrastructure, land rights and some of the spending relating to the National Partnership on Northern Territory remote Aboriginal investment. The funding provided under several small national partnership agreements is detailed in Budget Paper No 3.

The Indigenous Expenditure Reports from the Productivity Commission are a good source of information. The 2017 report has expenditure data from federal, state and territory governments for 2015–16, with historical data provided for 2012-13, 2010-11 and 2008-09 (Productivity Commission, 2017).

National partnership agreements (NPAs)

There are currently three NPAs that provide funding for Indigenous health initiatives in remote areas, including the Torres Strait.

National Partnership on management of Torres Strait / Papua New Guinea cross-border health issues

This NP provides $19.1 million / 3 years (from 2017-18 to 2019-20) to Queensland as a contribution to the costs of treating Papua New Guinean nationals who travel through the Torres Strait Treaty zone and access healthcare facilities in the Queensland health and hospitals network.
National Partnership on mosquito control and cross-border liaison in the Torres Strait
This NP provides $3 million / 3 years (2017-18 to 2019-20) to Queensland to assist in mosquito detection and elimination in the Torres Strait. This funding also supports employment of a communication officer to improve communication and coordination between Australia and Papua New Guinea and reduce the spread of communicable diseases in the Torres Strait.

National Partnership on Indigenous Health
In 2018-19, $15.9 million is provided to Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory for programs to improve Indigenous health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense (§m)</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
<th>2021-22</th>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<td><strong>Improving trachoma control service (Qld, WA, SA)</strong></td>
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<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Budget Paper No. 3 2018-19, Table 2.4.3 p. 24

National Partnership on the Northern Territory remote Aboriginal investment
This NP supports the Northern Territory to improve outcomes in schooling, health, community safety and job creation for Indigenous Australians. It has its origins in the funding provided under the Northern Territory Emergency Response. It includes funding to combat infectious diseases; to improve student attendance, educational attainment, Indigenous workforce development and teacher housing in remote and very remote schools; to improve public housing in remote communities; and to support an accredited Aboriginal interpreter service.

In 2018-19 it will provide $101.1 million to the Northern Territory for these purposes.
Expense ($m)

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<td>6.4</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>101.1</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>76.4</td>
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Budget Paper No. 3, 2018-19, Tables 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8

Housing

Remote Indigenous housing in the Northern Territory

The Government will provide $550.0 million / 5 years to the Northern Territory under a new national partnership for new and improved Indigenous housing.

Expense ($m)

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>110</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM&amp;C</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Budget Paper No. 2, 2018-19, p. 168

The National Partnership on Remote Housing negotiated with the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia in 2016 concluded in June 2018 (PM&C, 2018c).

Overall, since 2008, some $5 billion has been invested in remote housing. A recent review found that this funding has delivered over 11,500 more livable homes in remote Australia (around 4,000 new houses and 7,500 refurbishments) and assisted with Indigenous employment but that, with population growth, an additional 5,500 homes are required by 2028 to reduce levels of overcrowding in remote areas to acceptable levels. Half of the additional need is in the Northern Territory (PM&C, 2018d).

These findings only partly explain why the NP has been replaced in this budget with a single agreement to provide $550.0 million / 5 years only to the Northern Territory. This has the effect of cutting $1.5 billion from remote Indigenous housing funding. It is particularly concerning that the Government is backing away from its commitments to address the critical shortfalls in remote housing during the current Closing the Gap Strategy refresh process.
The situation is aggravated for the states that now miss out on remote Indigenous housing funding and for those Indigenous populations who live in non-remote areas because the Government has failed to secure agreements with the states and territories on a new NP for housing and homelessness, announced in the 2017-18 Budget.

**Education**

**Reforms to ABSTUDY**

The Government will provide $38.1 million / 5 years for reforms to ABSTUDY for secondary school students. The changes include:

- Providing the Boarding Allowance to all ABSTUDY recipients under 16 years of age receiving the Living Allowance;
- Implementing safer and more flexible travel arrangements for ABSTUDY secondary students studying away from home, including more supervised trips for students and more family or community member visits;
- Applying the Maintenance Income Test more fairly to ABSTUDY payments;
- Simplified criteria for the approval of secondary school scholarships under ABSTUDY, allowing students to access a wider range of schools; and
- Making more frequent payments to boarding providers, linked to student attendance (DHS 2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense ($m)</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
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<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
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<td>7.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Budget paper No. 2, 2018-19, p. 170

Earlier this year the Independent Schools Council of Australia warned that the viability of large-scale independent boarding schools for Indigenous secondary students was threatened unless changes are urgently made to the structure and level of ABSTUDY funding (ISCA 2018).

ABSTUDY has now been in operation for 50 years. The *Study Away Review* by the Australian Government in 2017 found that in the 2015 calendar year, there were more than 5,700 Indigenous secondary boarders who received ABSTUDY payments to assist with the costs of study, boarding expenses and travel. Approximately 5,200 of these students had their ABSTUDY benefits paid directly to a boarding school or residence (for example, student hostel) on their behalf, and 77% of the 5,700 were attending non-government schools within their home state. More than three-quarters had a home address classified as ‘very remote’ or ‘remote’. Less than 10% had a home address classified as ‘inner regional’ or ‘major city’ (Commonwealth 2017).
The review also found that:

- for many students and their families there is little preparation and information;
- ABSTUDY administration is experienced as being overly complex;
- travel support varies from student to student and for many students it is inadequate; and
- there is a lack of alternative education options for students not suited to mainstream boarding.

The budget changes will go some way towards addressing these issues.

It is worth noting that the Budget includes $96.1 million / 4 years to implement the Government’s response to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (Budget paper No. 2, 2018-19, p. 94). This funding will support young people from regional, rural and remote communities to transition to further education, training and employment. However the needs of Indigenous students were not part of the terms of reference for this report and they are nowhere mentioned in the report (Halsey, 2018).

**Health and Aged Care**

The funding for the Indigenous Australians Health Program (IAHP) is 3.8 million / 4 years, a small increase ($200 million) over funds previously provided. This is not specifically stated in the Budget but must be inferred from Health subfunctions tables in Budget Paper No 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016-17 $m</th>
<th>2017-18 $m</th>
<th>2018-19 $m</th>
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<tr>
<td>2018-19 Budget</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>882</td>
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<td>952</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017-18 Budget</td>
<td>789</td>
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<td>932</td>
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Budget Paper No 1 2017-18 Table 8 p6-20
Budget Paper No 1 2018-19 Table 8 p6-18

However somewhat different figures are provided in the Health Portfolio Budget Statement for Indigenous health (Outcome 2.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017-18 Est actual $m</th>
<th>2018-19 Budget $m</th>
<th>2019-20 Forward $m</th>
<th>2020-21 Forward $m</th>
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<tr>
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<td>934.9</td>
<td>971.9</td>
<td>1011.9</td>
<td>1052.6</td>
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DoH Portfolio Budget Statement 2018-19. Table 2.2.1

Indigenous leaders have welcomed this continued funding commitment but have noted that that the provision of culturally safe and appropriate healthcare must also be integrated into the mainstream health system. The new funding to aged care is also appreciated, but the point is made that unless the
large gap in life expectancy is resolved, many Indigenous peoples may not enjoy the longevity to benefit from these services (National Congress, 2018).

Indigenous-specific items in the Budget:

**A new funding model for primary care**

The Budget announced a new funding model for primary care (ie for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations) to provide greater transparency of funding and improve health outcomes. This new model will be based on patient numbers, episodes of care and the remote nature of the treatment and need. There is no additional funding provided for this initiative, which needs further consultation and development ahead of implementation set for July 2019.

**More funding for eye health initiatives**

Existing eye health initiatives will be bolstered by $34 million to provide further health checks and address the issue of vision loss. However only $3 million of this is new funding. This includes:

- $2.5 million for 50 new retinal cameras and training for the detection of diabetic retinopathy.
- $0.5 million for Eye and Ear Surgical Support Services (ESSS) to address cataract surgery needs.

  The average waiting time for cataract surgery is 152 days for Indigenous Australians versus 93 days for non-Indigenous Australians.

The third main cause of vision loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is uncorrected refractive error - there are no funds to address this, also it is easily fixed through access to spectacles.

**Medicare support for renal dialysis in remote areas and funding for more remote dialysis units**

On the recommendation of the Medical Benefits Scheme Review Committee, a new Medicare item will provide $590 per dialysis treatment delivered in primary care in remote communities, at an estimated total cost to the budget of $34.8 million / 4 years.

Five new remote renal dialysis clinics will be established in Ernabella (South Australia) and Utopia, Ampilawatja, Kalkarindji and Lajamanu in the Northern Territory. This expansion will take the number of dialysis machines in remote communities from 36 to 54 in 17 facilities, allowing more than 400 patients to receive dialysis in their communities, compared to the current patient load of 250. More than 1800 Indigenous people currently receive dialysis (Puddy, 2018).
Aged care

Funding of $105.7 million / 4 years (includes $32.0 million from within the existing resources) is provided to support the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program to deliver additional residential aged care places and home care packages in remote Indigenous communities.

Social Services and Support

Reform of Community Development Program

This budget initiative is described as ‘redirecting funding of $1.1 billion / 4 years ... to better meet the unique needs of job seekers in remote Australia and to aid their transition into paid employment’. It is not possible to tell from the budget papers exactly what funding changes have been made.

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Capital – Dept Jobs & Small Bus. | - | 8.0 | - | - |

Capital – Dept Human Service | - | 0.1 | - | - |

Total | - | 8.1 | - | - |

Under these new arrangements, Community Development Program (CDP) job seekers will be subject to the Jobseeker Compliance Framework introduced in the 2017-18 Budget. Eligible employers will be able to apply for a two-year wage subsidy of up to $21,034 for employing CDP job seekers in an approved job, with additional bonus payments based on job seeker retention. Once fully rolled out, up to 6,000 wage subsidy positions will be available.

In a move that has been labelled "draconian", CDP recipients can now be handed harsher penalties for failing to meet requirements that could see them lose all income for up to four weeks (National Congress, 2018).

It is not clear how the 6000 wage subsidy positions will be allocated and whether all of these will go to Indigenous people (about 83% of the 35,000 participants in CDP are Indigenous).
The discriminatory provision that requires remote jobseekers to work more than double the hours of non-remote jobseekers for the same income remains. Participants earn, on average, about $11 an hour for up to 20 (reduced from 25) hours of work or work-like activity for 46 weeks a year and face strict penalties for non-compliance. Non-remote jobseekers are required to work 20 hours a week for only six months of the year.

Changes to Disability Support Pension

From 1 January 2019, the maximum payment suspension period available to Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients who are imprisoned will be reduced from two years to 13 weeks, consistent with the suspension periods available to imprisoned recipients of other income support payments such as Newstart Allowance.

This provision will have a considerable impact on Indigenous women who are more likely to be receiving the DSP and more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous Australians.

Deductions from welfare payments for failure to pay court-imposed fines

The Government proposes to establish a scheme, ironically described as ‘encouraging lawful behaviour from income support recipients’, under which the Commonwealth will be able to make compulsory deductions from the welfare payments of serial fine defaulters who have outstanding state and territory court-imposed fines. The Commonwealth will also be able to suspend or cancel the welfare payments of individuals who have outstanding state and territory arrest warrants for indictable criminal offences.

The financial costs are not for publication as the scheme is subject to negotiation with the states and territories.

This budget provision raises deep concerns about its impact on Indigenous people. It has been described by the National Congress of First Peoples as ‘a recipe for ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society will remain so, with unpaid fines likely leading to increased rates of incarceration rather than pathways to prosperity’ (National Congress, 2018).

The Australian Law Reform Commission has made a series of recommendations that Indigenous people, who are over-represented as fine recipients and are less likely than non-Indigenous people to pay a fine at first notice (attributed to financial capacity, itinerancy and literacy levels), be allowed to work off unpaid fines, rather than being locked up (ALRC, 2017).
**Extending the cashless debit card trial**

The Government has announced it will extend the cashless debit card trial in Ceduna (South Australia) and East Kimberley (Western Australia) for one year to 30 June 2019. The Government will also undertake an additional independent evaluation of this trial. The expenditure for this measure is not for publication as negotiations with potential commercial providers are yet to be finalised - in fact the costs of this measure over its implementation have never been made public, although it appears to be over $25 million (Klein, 2017).

The previous evaluation commissioned by the Government and released in 2017 generally presented the results of this trial in a positive light (DSS, 2017). Others are less sanguine, in large part because community safety and violence have not improved (Hunt, 2017).

**Culture and land rights**

**Commemoration of 250th anniversary of Captain Cook’s voyage**

The Government is providing $48.7 million / 4 years to commemorate the 250th anniversary of James Cook’s first voyage to Australia and the Pacific. This includes a $25.0 million contribution to the New South Wales Government to support the Kamay Botany Bay National Park 250th Anniversary project. Most of this funding has already been provided for and is not included in the 2018-19 Budget.

The package is described in Budget Paper No. 2 (p 78) as ‘supporting events and exhibitions including a digital platform and educational material on this significant anniversary in Australia’s history, and the voyaging of the replica HMB Endeavour.’

The package will also fund cultural engagement and consultation with Indigenous communities, including specialised training for Indigenous cultural heritage professionals in regional areas. It is not clear what this will entail.

The monument proposed at the site of Captain Cook’s first landing on 29 April 1770 at Botany Bay in Sydney has drawn praise and criticism from the Indigenous community (NITV, 2018).

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land and Sea Future Fund**

The Government will establish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land and Sea Future Fund (ATSILSFF) from 1 July 2018. This will be funded by transferring the balance of the current $2 billion Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Account from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; this fund will be managed by the Future Fund Board of Guardians. The ATSILSFF will enable payments
to be made to the Indigenous Land Corporation for acquiring and purchasing land and water assets on behalf of Indigenous people.

The original Land Account was set up following the Mabo decision to assist those whose native title had been extinguished, by providing an annual dividend to the Indigenous Land Corporation to enable the acquisition and management of land on behalf of Indigenous Australians. These changes were announced in February (Scullion, 2018).

**Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program**

The budget papers state that this program will engage the community including traditional owners in reef protection and sea country management, including through a reef communications campaign (Budget Paper No. 2, 2018-19, p. 98). In reality, the extent to which the traditional owners of the land and sea will be involved in this program is not clear.

**Continued funding for Indigenous Rangers**

In the week before the Budget was announced, and less than two months before the program’s funding was due to expire, the Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion announced continued funding of $250 million / 3 years for the Indigenous Rangers program (Davidson, 2018). This provision is not in the budget papers.

The Working On Country program, established in 2007, employs more than 2,000 people who care for 60% of Indigenous Protected Areas, which comprise about 43% of the national reserve system.

**Mainstream programs that will potentially benefit Indigenous women:**

- $22.0 million / 5 years is provided through the Attorney General’s Department for a number of small initiatives to address the rights of older Australians and protect them from abuse (Budget paper No. 2, 2018-19, p. 76-77).
- $83.3 million / 5 years for a Rural Health Strategy with a substantial focus on workforce issues.
- $84 million in additional funding to the Royal Flying Doctor to improve the delivery and availability of dental, mental health and emergency aeromedical services in rural and remote areas. The Infrastructure portfolio is providing $28.3 million / 4 years to further upgrade remote airstrips.
- $40 million / 4 years (from 2019-20) for aged care facilities in regional, rural and remote Australia.
- Funding from the Medical Research Future Fund ($17.5 million / 4 years) for research into women’s health, maternal health and First 2000 Days to address the social determinants of health that impact on children.
- $37.6 million / 4 years to improve follow-up care for people discharged from hospital after a suicide attempt.
- $40 million / 3 years to support professional development in primary care for the treatment and support of alcohol and drug abuse.
• $20.9 million / 5 years for Healthy Active Beginnings - a number of small programs and initiatives to improve the health of women and children.
• $32.8 million / 4 years provided in the More Choices for a Healthy Life ageing and aged care package for a trial to improve palliative care in residential aged care. This funding is contingent on matching funds from the states and territories.
• $82.5 million / 4 years provided in the More Choices for a Healthy Life ageing and aged care package for mental health services for people in residential aged care facilities.
• $20.0 million / 4 years provided in the More Choices for a Healthy Life ageing and aged care package for a pilot of services led by mental health nurses to target the mental health of older Australians in the community.
• $113.3 million / 5 years for a new Integrated Carer Support Services model.
• Infrastructure projects that will improve roads and transportation in remote areas.
• $259.6 million provided to the Northern Territory to offset reductions in GST share in 2017-18. This funding is to assist the Northern Territory Government to deliver essential services, including to remote communities.

**What’s not in the Budget**

• Tackling sexually transmitted diseases. There are growing concerns about the rates of syphilis and HTLV-1 infections in Indigenous populations. An outbreak of syphilis that started in Northern Territory passed into the Kimberley region of Western Australia (Collard, 2018). Six of 13 infants with reported congenital syphilis have died (Conifer, 2018). Hospital and laboratory data indicate that human T-lymphotropic virus type 1 (HTLV-1), which causes an aggressive type of leukemia, spinal cord injury and is associated with chronic lung infection, is endemic to central Australia but there are no programs to monitor or prevent its spread (Einsiedal et al, 2016).
• There is no mention of the impact of climate change on health, which can be expected to have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous Australians in more remote areas (Green et al, 2009).
• Addressing homelessness and housing quality outside of the Northern Territory.
• Funding to support Indigenous women and children subject to family violence and child protection orders.
• Progress towards constitutional recognition, in the form of a First Nations voice, as put forward by the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
• Addressing incarceration rates.
• Despite the findings of the *Pathways to Justice* report (Law Reform Commission, 2018) and the Northern Territory Royal Commission (NTRC, 2018) there is no funding for solutions to the shockingly high incarceration rate. Indeed, this is likely to be made worse by the introduction of punitive measures for those who have been incarcerated.

**Gender implications**
The link between strong culture and wellbeing is well understood in Indigenous communities and women play a key role in building this link. Within their communities, women are the primary nurturers and caregivers and they hold important cultural and leadership roles. Understanding the specific impacts of government policies and programs (and the lack thereof) on Indigenous women is a key consideration
in efforts to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, especially as impacts on women also affect their children.

**Health**

Indigenous women have poorer health outcomes compared to non-Aboriginal women in Australia: their life expectancy is 73.7 years, compared to 83.1 for non-Indigenous women. The maternal and perinatal outcomes of Indigenous mothers and their babies are markedly poorer than those of non-Indigenous women and their babies. Indigenous women also have a significantly higher (x 2.3) burden of preventable chronic disease (AIHW 2018).

Indigenous people face a number of barriers to accessing health services including cost, cultural appropriateness and distance from health services.

While there have been some significant improvements in Indigenous health in recent times, the gap has not narrowed because the pace of these improvements has not matched that in the broader community. In part this can be blamed on a failure to address the broader social determinants of health (AIHW, 2016) and to ensure cultural safety and respect within mainstream services.

There is nothing in this budget to address these issues.

**Education**

It is estimated that the Federal Government spends $162 million / year to support the participation of young Indigenous people in education programs, but young girls get only 33% of this. They also receive significantly fewer opportunities to be mentored and supported in their schooling and life aspirations (ALP, 2018). Disengagement from the educational system and the opportunities it offers is thus a real risk for Indigenous girls.

There are some small improvements in funding for education in this budget but nothing to address the funding disparities.

**Employment**

Although they have higher education levels, the proportion of Indigenous women employed remains lower than Indigenous men. This seems to be due to the amount of unpaid work women undertake, mainly care of children and those with a disability (ABS, 2010).

Despite the acknowledged failures of the CDP, this budget introduces only minor improvements, including a new wage subsidy scheme and slight reduction in the hours participants need to work for their benefits. But for a wage subsidy scheme to have any impact, there must be jobs available in the first place. Since the introduction of the CDP, 300,000 financial penalties have been applied, despite
having only around 33,000 participants: this situation is likely to worsen under the new provisions in the Budget.

**Welfare**

A higher proportion of Indigenous people aged 15 and over received a government pension or allowance as their main source of income (52%) compared with non-Indigenous people aged 15 and over (25%). This proportion increases with remoteness. About 23% of Indigenous Australians get a parenting payment, of this 14% is for a single parent, most likely a mother; six percent receive a Disability Support Pension and 5.5% receive a carer payment (AIHW 2017).

Punitive measures that will take welfare income away from Indigenous women - there are several in this budget - will further entrench disadvantage.

**Cashless Debit Card**

The Cashless Debit Card trials have racial and gendered consequences, specifically for Indigenous women. They cast them as inadequate managers of family finances and expand bureaucratic control over their lives and their families (Bielefeld, 2017).

The evidence base for the effectiveness the Cashless Debit Card trials based on outcomes that are meaningful for Indigenous women and their families is meagre and needs to be strengthened if this approach is to be continued.

**Carers**

Some 14% of Indigenous women have caring responsibilities with 20% of unpaid assistance provided by women aged 45-54. These women are themselves likely to need help due to their own disabilities, chronic illnesses and age. Being a carer affects their income and many women, especially those in remote areas, have trouble accessing carer support payments (Carers Australia).

There is no guarantee that the proposed reforms to carer support services in the Budget will better help Indigenous women.

**Domestic violence**

Indigenous women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised for violent assault and 10 times more likely to die from violence. It is estimated that the national annual cost of violence against Indigenous women and children will reach $2.2 billion by 2021-22 (ALP 2018).

The lack of availability of housing in remote areas is a key factor for women trying to leave domestic violence (Terzon, 2016). Women in remote communities are moving hundreds of kilometres away from their homes to escape abusive partners because of a lack of safe houses for domestic violence victims (Akerman, 2015).
There is no new funding in this budget to help Indigenous women experiencing family violence or for the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, despite the growing unmet need.

**Housing and homelessness**

Indigenous people comprised 25% of the people accessing homeless services in 2016-17 and 61% of these people were women (ALP, 2018). Yet there is nothing in this budget to address housing issues for Indigenous families who live outside of the Northern Territory. In particular, poor and crowded housing is an issue for Indigenous people living outside of rural and remote areas.

Although the budget papers contain the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, with federal funding of $6.25 billion / 4 years, no agreements have yet been reached with the states and territories (Budget Paper No. 3, 2018-19, pp. 41-42).

**Justice**

Indigenous women are imprisoned at 21 times the rate of non-Indigenous women (Wahlquist, 2017). They are currently the fastest growing cohort of the incarcerated population in Australia. Often their offences are minor. The three main offences Indigenous women were appearing in court for are: road traffic and motor vehicle regulatory offences (42.3%); public order offences (15.4%); and offences against justice procedures, government security and operations (12.1%) (Viviani 2016).

Some 80% of these Indigenous women in prison are mothers (Wahlquist 2017), so their imprisonment causes huge disruption in their family and their community. It increases the risk that their children will end up in the child protection system or potentially in the criminal justice system and perpetuates disadvantage.

A 2017 report found that the lack of data on female Indigenous prisoners, and lack of specific initiatives to help them, has allowed the imprisonment rate to increase (HRLC, 2017). In particular, Indigenous women with disabilities (including mental health and cognitive disorders) are set on a path into the criminal justice system (McEntyre, 2015).

A number of reports have recommended that Indigenous people with minor offences for issues like fines be allowed to work these out in the community rather than be imprisoned (for example, ALRC, 2017). Keeping Indigenous girls in school will reduce their likelihood of coming into contact with the justice system, yet there are few programs specifically designed for this group (Axleby, 2018).

It is imperative that a social justice target is included in the refresh the Closing the Gap effort. In addition, for these changes to happen, more affordable legal assistance will be needed. Where such services as exist, they are already operating at crisis level. The need for legal services must be comprehensively mapped to determine the gaps in their provision.
Recommendations

Recommendation 2

- NFAW recommends that Government commits to increased levels of consultation with Indigenous communities and leaders and greater attention to addressing their needs, implementing their stated proposals, acknowledging and utilising their knowledge and skills, and measuring outcomes they see as meaningful.

Recommendation 3

- NFAW recommends that there is greater transparency in how Indigenous funds are allocated and spent.

Recommendation 4

- NFAW recommends that a more holistic approach is taken to addressing Indigenous disadvantage. Specifically, for Indigenous health, the gap will never be closed unless and until the social determinants of health are addressed.

Recommendation 5

- NFAW recommends that there are stated national targets to reducing homelessness, improving the quality of housing, and reducing rates of incarceration - together with appropriate resourcing and programs to achieve these.

Recommendation 6

- NFAW recommends that more attention is paid to ensure cultural safety for Indigenous people working in and accessing mainstream services.

Recommendation 7

- NFAW recommends that the Government works towards the delivery of a constitutionally enshrined First Nations Voice as outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

References


IMPACT ON MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN

This Budget includes a number of potentially positive measures for Australia’s migrant and refugee women, who make up just under 4 million of the Australian population or one third of the Australian female population, according to the 2016 Census. These are measures targeted at migrant and refugee populations and those supporting Australian women without further disaggregation. However, Australia’s women from migrant and refugee backgrounds remain invisible in this Budget.

The mainstream measures that have the prospect of benefiting migrant and refugee women include measures around: women’s safety; women’s health and wellbeing, and women’s economic capability. The critical concern is that these measures lack focus on responding to the needs of diverse cohorts of women, including the complexities experienced by women from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The impact of these measures on outcomes for migrant and refugee women will depend solely on the measures’ tailored implementation and the extent to which they are responsive to the specific considerations of this cohort.

The extended funding for Domestic Violence Response Training (DV-Alert) for community and frontline workers to support women and children affected by domestic and family violence is a welcome step. However, to have a positive impact on access and experience for migrant and refugee women, the training would need to maintain adequate specialist settlement and multicultural components. Similarly, the funding towards 1800 RESPECT is a significant step in increasing access to trauma counselling, including for migrant and refugee women, subject to the services being culturally and linguistically responsive and accessible. A holistic approach to addressing violence against women is required that sufficiently addresses the challenges and disadvantage faced by migrant and refugee women (Simonovic, 2017).

Migrant and refugee women are more likely to face barriers to accessing support services when experiencing violence, including: the inherent isolation of living in a new country away from established networks; community pressures and expectations; higher levels of financial dependence on perpetrators or community; lack of knowledge of rights and available services; language barriers; fear of shame and isolation from the community; and fear of deportation and removal of children (AWAVA, 2017; Vaughan et al, 2016).
Mainstream responses are often not appropriate or adequate to support migrant and refugee women. A dedicated focus, expertise and resources are required to ensure appropriate responses for women of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, both within mainstream and specialised services. Notably, the Budget fails to ensure that that migration status and eligibility requirements for support services do not disempower victims of violence or discourage them from leaving violent relationships, despite the Australian Government’s commitment in the Third Action Plan (2017-2019) of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women.

The Budget measures under Healthy Active Beginnings, Investing in Health and medical Research - Medical Research Future Fund, and More Choices for a Longer Life are important opportunities to promote better health and wellbeing for women across the life course. However, to achieve a tangible impact on the situation of migrant and refugee women, these measures must include a dedicated focus, supported by earmarked funding.

Migration and ethnicity-related factors, as well as refugee-like experiences, are important social determinants of health. Refugee women are significantly more likely than men to report poorer levels of health, to be at risk of serious mental health problems and to experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (DSS, 2017). Older migrant women have higher rates of psychological morbidity than men (Minas et al, 2008). Women of migrant and refugee backgrounds are at increased risk of poor health across pregnancy (Higginbottom et al, 2015) and reproductive health (Keygnaert et al, 2014).

Many factors contributing to health disparities relate to broader issues such as access to care, interactions with the healthcare system and health literacy. Migrant and refugee women tend to have lower levels of health literacy, lack familiarity with preventative health care, and have differing personal concepts of health and illness, and therefore are more likely to access acute and emergency care. In view of these factors, the measures must include earmarked programs and funding to adequately address the needs of migrant and refugee women.

The key positives as part of the targeted measures for migrants and refugees are:

- the improved sequencing of settlement and employment services for newly settled refugees;
- the new grants scheme for community organisations to support newly arrived migrants to integrate into Australian society, including skill building and mentoring programs; and
- the increased accessibility to extended tuition entitlements under the Adult Migrant English Program for migrants aged between 15 and 17 years.
With regard to the improved sequencing of settlement and employment services, newly arrived refugees will now have more time - six months after arrival - to focus on settling in Australia and learning English before they start needing to find employment, with exceptions for those with a higher level of English language proficiency. This measure will have a positive impact on women in this cohort of recently settled refugees.

The real benefit of the Fostering Integration Grants Scheme for migrant and refugee women will be conditional on providing a dedicated focus on women as part of the delivery. Therefore, it is critically important that the scheme includes a migrant and refugee women stream as a prominent priority, underpinned by earmarked funding.

With regard to the Adult Migrant English Program, those participants aged under 18 will now have no time limits for seeking an extension to their tuition entitlements, which is consistent with the accessibility provisions for adult migrants. With women making up a majority of the Adult Migrant English Program enrolments (Acil Allen Consulting, 2015), this measure would potentially benefit a proportion of young migrant and refugee women.

These potentially positive initiatives are overshadowed by the proposed introduction of a four-year waiting period before migrants can access a whole range of critical social security payments. This measure represents an increase from the current two-year waiting period and will have a disproportionately harsh impact on women and their children. Further, the measure includes some allowances not previously subject to waiting periods at all - notably family tax benefit, paid parental leave, parenting payments and widow allowance, which are all disproportionately accessed by women.

Allowances intended for times of crisis, such as the widow allowance, bereavement allowance and carer allowance, are more likely to be accessed by women, who provide an inordinate amount of care to family members and are more frequently reliant on a partner’s income. Waiting periods for paid parental leave, parenting payments and family tax benefits threaten women’s reproductive rights. They would also jeopardise developmental outcomes of their children - Australian citizens - noting the recognised lifetime impact of the first 2,000 days. Importantly, these measures, and particularly the restriction of access to paid parental leave, will also have a significantly detrimental effect on migrant and refugee women’s economic participation and empowerment, and will result in entrenching migrant women’s economic disadvantage.
Workforce participation rates of women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds continue to fall well below the rest of Australia, sitting at 47.3%, compared to 59.2% of all women, 69.5% for culturally and linguistically diverse men and 70.4% for all men (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017; PM&C, 2017). The withholding of the necessary support in the initial years of settlement will have a further detrimental impact on migrant and refugee women’s capacity to enter and stay in the workforce, and to support their overall wellbeing.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 8**

- NFAW recommends that the implementation of the mainstream budget measures impacting on women’s safety; women’s health and wellbeing, and women’s economic capability provides a dedicated focus and expenditure to ensure tangible positive outcomes for migrant and refugee women.

**Recommendation 9**

- NFAW recommends that the proposed extension of the waiting period for newly settled migrants be abolished as measures that would entrench migrant women’s economic disadvantage and jeopardise the wellbeing of a substantial proportion of Australia’s children.

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Commonwealth of Australia (Joint Standing Committee on Migration). (2017). No one teaches you how to become an Australian.

Commonwealth of Australia (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet [PM&C]). (2017). Towards 2025.


IMPACT ON WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Winners

• There are only implied indirect wins for women with disabilities in this budget.

Losers

• Women with disabilities who are not eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) because they are ‘insufficiently disabled’ by their impairment and/or who are older than 65, are seeing increasing erosion of benefits.

The Budget

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Women with disabilities eligible for the NDIS packages have noted and welcomed the allocation of $43 billion to fund the NDIS over the forward estimates to 2021-2022. This funding takes the scheme past the projected date of full rollout. However the allocation of this money is predicated on matching by the states/territories to provide $40 billion to fund the scheme, so that overall there is not yet secure funding. There is no evidence that the $43 billion is hypothecated.

The 2018 Budget puts a strong faith in the NDIS. In employment the predicted strong employment growth in the care industries associated with providing support for people with disabilities and the aged will be in jobs for women in the low paid, casual workforce where there is little career development or incentive for skills development. This is indirect assistance for women with disabilities, but it comes at the expense of other groups of women identified in the Australian Government's 2018-19 Budget Statement Women’s economic capability and leadership, as mainly new mothers and Indigenous and rural women.

Only 40% of NDIS participants are women. Its rollout is not yet resulting in increased numbers of women with disabilities able to find employment, or increased hours of employment, or indeed having any effect on return to the workforce.

Primary carers are not being freed up by having extra supports for their child with disabilities, enabling improved employment outcomes. There is anecdotal evidence of women carers needing to reduce their hours of work in order to attend to the additional administrative work involved in managing an NDIS package.
**Social Welfare Measures**

Fifty per cent of women with disabilities have incomes in the lowest 2 quintiles, and have higher living costs associated with their disabilities so that any measure which puts them onto a lower level of welfare support will have a disproportionately negative effect.

**Income Support for People with Disabilities**

The Disability Support Pensions (DSP) is the primary component of Income Support for people with disabilities. The Government will make savings of $428million in 2018-19 (Budget Paper No. 1, pp. 3-24) and $4.5billion over the forward estimates by targeting eligibility for the DSP to reduce the numbers in the scheme. At present women with disabilities comprise only 46% of those on the DSP.

Similarly the Government will make savings of $634million ($2.3billion to 2021-22) by increasing the pension qualifying age (Budget Paper No. 1, pp. 3-24). This measure will affect women with disabilities to a greater degree, because they live longer than their male counterparts. They are also more likely to be unemployed, or in extremely low paid jobs, and not to have access to services that were formerly available to all people with disabilities which have now been rolled into the NDIS in bilateral agreements with states/territories.

A small sum of $92.1million over 5 years is earmarked for services to people with disabilities who are not eligible for the NDIS. This is not new money, having been allocated in 2017-18, and is unlikely to alleviate the losses from programs transitioning to the NDIS when there are over 3 million non-NDIS eligible people with disabilities in this category.

**Welfare to Work**

The NewStart payment has not been raised, despite calls from a wide variety of agencies and corporations. At the same time the raft of welfare payment saving measures in the budget will force higher numbers of women with disabilities onto NewStart. This will have knock-on consequences for mental health breakdown and accommodation crisis.

In the same category of savings, the government will save $241m in 2018-2019 ($721million to 2021-22) in the Job Seeker Income Support category by being more stringent about welfare to work measures and tightening eligibility so that fewer people get welfare (Budget Paper No. 1, pp. 3-25).

Women with disabilities face bigger barriers in getting work, even when their qualifications are equivalent to or greater than for their male counterparts. Fifty per cent of women with disabilities have incomes in the lowest 2 quintiles, and have higher living costs associated with their disabilities.
The Government will extend the Department of Human Services' (DHS) fraud detection and debt recovery activities. From 1 July 2019, welfare recipients who have not paid a court-imposed fine will have money deducted from their regular payment until the debt is paid. Women with cognitive impairment are highly likely to be caught in this debt recovery program. They will not qualify for the NDIS, yet will have lower organisational skills accompanied by higher living costs for medications without the resourcefulness to find a way to get out of a debt cycle. The services that might previously have supported these women and lessened the chance of getting into debt have been rolled into the NDIS.

From 1 July 2021, DHS will continue to ‘enhance the integrity of social welfare payments’ by extending data matching activities with the ATO. The mere rumour of this happening will increase the stress levels of women with disabilities. These measures will mean the Government hopes to achieve savings of $299.3 million over 3 years from 2019-20 (Budget Paper No. 2, p.178).

There is $99million for implementation of the new Disability Employment Services framework, although no pro-active allocation for women with disabilities, and despite the fact that the larger numbers of women with disabilities of working age account for less than half of the DES service offers at present. This is a dire need, with the labor force participation rate for people with disabilities at a mere 53.4% compared to an 83.2% participation rate for the non-disabled. There are 60 000 fewer men with disabilities of working age (15-64) - 1.5m compared to 1.1m women with disabilities. Employment outcomes for women with disabilities are poor, with only 20% being employed full time. Women with disabilities who do get work are concentrated in part time work (25% compared to 16% of men with disabilities).

A small allocation of $0.5million is allocated to disability advocacy organisations to assist people with disabilities who may transition from Australian Disability Enterprise employment to another ADE (Budget Paper No. 2, p.176). There are about 20,000 people with disabilities in ADEs (with gender breakdown not publicly available).

A further $0.5million has been allocated for consultation with stakeholders to aid in the development of new models for supported employment, enabling it to operate consistent with the NDIS and to aid smooth transition to the NDIS for those already working in Australian Disability Enterprises.

**Other budget measures**

The Income Test threshold for Carer Allowance payments has been raised to $250K (Budget Paper No.2, p. 74).
The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement has attracted $1536million over 4 years, and it is good to see some continuity even though it does not represent an increase in income. Its parallel program, the National Affordable housing Specific Purpose Payment, did not attract any new money having been allocated $1360million over 5 years in 2017-18 (Budget Paper No. 3, p. 21). Women with disabilities are disproportionately over-represented in housing stress and homelessness. There is occasional anecdotal evidence that women with disabilities are using prostitution as a means of earning money to maintain rental accommodation, and this funding may enable services to ameliorate any such trend.

Women with disabilities will be disproportionately affected by the reduction in funds for Housing and Community amenities with decreases in the National Partnership Payments to States/territories (this initiative also reflects the completion of urban development commitments) (Budget Paper No. 1, pp. 6-8). There is no funding for women’s emergency accommodation for women escaping situations of violence. Current shelters do not cater for women with disabilities. The funding of $338million in mental health for suicide prevention, older Australian and Mental Health research may also have an indirect affect on women with disabilities, especially those who are not eligible for the NDIS.

**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 10**

- As a priority, NFAW recommends that the Government fund special measures to implement the recommendations of the UN Committees for Human Rights Conventions to Australian governments, to ensure that women from marginalised groups have priority for accessible housing and access to Disability Employment Services.

**References**


Budget Measures
1. REVENUE AND FISCAL OUTLOOK

1.1 Budget overview

The Budget

The 2018-19 Budget estimates a significantly reduced fiscal deficit on a cash basis (the “underlying cash balance”) of $14.5 billion in 2018-19. This is an improvement in the budget bottom line, and the government forecasts reaching a surplus in 2019-20. Total receipts estimated for 2018-19 are $473.7 billion (Budget Paper No.1, Statement 3, Table 2, 3-10). This includes taxation receipts of $440.5 billion. Total government expenditure (payments) is estimated to be $484.6 billion (Budget Paper No.1, Statement 5, Table 1, 5-5). Taxation comprises 93% of all revenues and funds 91% of all expenditures.

Table 1: Budget aggregates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual 2016-17</th>
<th>Estimates 2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
<th>2021-22 Total(a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underlying cash balance ($b)(b)</td>
<td>-33.2</td>
<td>-18.2</td>
<td>-14.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent of GDP</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net operating balance ($b)</td>
<td>-32.1</td>
<td>-12.6</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent of GDP</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Total is equal to the sum of amounts from 2018-19 to 2021-22.
(b) Excludes expected net Future Fund earnings before 2020-21.
Source: Table 1, Budget Paper 1, Statement 3, 3-5.

Achieving fiscal balance at this time after a decade of fiscal deficits will depend on better than expected economic performance on many parameters, in particular higher commodity prices and higher company tax receipts. The recent reduction in the Australian general government fiscal deficit largely reflects cyclical gains in tax collection, including a strong pickup in Commonwealth Government revenues from income taxes. This year, the budget shows a small recovery in revenues because commodity prices and company tax revenues have picked up.

The tax to GDP cap and excessive expenditure constraint

The budget proposes a 23.9% “speed limit” or “cap” on Australia’s tax to GDP ratio. The cap is supposed to limit Commonwealth taxes as a share of GDP once a budget surplus is reached:

“In this Budget, the Government has formalised its 23.9 per cent tax-to-GDP cap within its fiscal strategy. Whilst the tax system exists to fund the essential services that Australians expect and are entitled to receive, the cap ensures the Government lives within its means by not imposing an increasing tax burden on Australians over time, which would adversely affect growth, costing jobs and investment.” (Budget Paper No.1, Statement 3, 3-8).
While cutting taxes, the budget achieves Commonwealth fiscal balance by limiting spending excessively, at the expense of good government and the poorest in our society. The Government is offsetting all new spending with cuts elsewhere, and has not increased welfare payments such as Newstart, in spite of its dramatic decline in real terms relative to wages. In the longer term, the forecast surplus depends on optimistic wage parameters and continued high company tax revenues as well as lower interest payments on government debt. The IMF’s projections of fiscal consolidation and falling government debt to GDP ratios for Australia over the period 2018 to 2023 have a similar bias; they assume that expenditure reductions account for nearly three quarters of the improvement in the fiscal balance.

As debt is paid down, the level of taxation becomes the primary determinant on government spending. Australia’s Charter of Budget Honesty aims for prudent budgeting in the medium to long term but does not contain a legislated fiscal rule. Usually, fiscal rules seek to limit deficits to balance revenues and expenditures over the business cycle, or to restrict public debt to pay for capital investment and not current expenditures such as salaries or social security. The OECD recommends limits on debt and expenditures to help ensure sustainable budgeting.

The “formalisation” of the 23.9% tax to GDP cap is political not legal and puts constraints on tax reform at the level of government most able to achieve it - in our most important taxes. The tax “cap” is not a fiscal rule, but rather it aims to limit the size of government by keeping taxes arbitrarily low. A tax to GDP cap at this level was recommended by the National Commission of Audit, established in 2013 by then-Treasurer Joe Hockey with precisely this goal.

There are precedents for the tax cap by governments on both sides of politics. From 1985 to 1988, the Hawke-Keating government committed to a “trilogy” capping taxes, spending and debt. That political commitment, which was not fully met, had the goal of maintaining the tax level over the electoral cycle to support tax reform package that lowered marginal rates and broadened the tax base. The government enacted the Capital Gains Tax, Fringe Benefits Tax and significant company and international tax reforms.

The federal tax cap of 23.9% of GDP is an average of tax levels since 2000. If we averaged tax levels over the last century, this would produce a cap of about 15% of GDP, starting from the very low federal tax level of 4% of GDP at federation. This is shown in the next chart.
Comparing debt and taxes with other countries

Overall, Australia’s fiscal balance performance remains poor relative to most comparable countries. In April 2018, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published revised fiscal indicators for all countries (International Monetary Fund, 2018). The fiscal balance for Australia (including the states and territories), is estimated at -1.7 per cent of GDP for calendar year 2018, the seventh worst fiscal balance for the 35 advanced economies.

Australian government debt (including state and local government) was 64% of GDP in 2015, according to the OECD (OECD, 2018a). However, private (household) debt in Australia is one of the highest in the world, estimated at close to 200% of GDP (Chalmers, 2018). It is likely that women are worse off as a result of this relatively low government debt; the latter, at low interest rates, spreads the risk of debt, and funds public expenditure on social security, education and health, from which women benefit.

The Government commits to “stabilising and reducing net debt over time” in this budget. Australia’s government net debt is estimated at $341 billion in 2017-18, or 18.6% of GDP, which the Government describes as a “peak” of net debt declining ultimately (projections only) to an extremely low 3.8% of GDP by 2021-22. The declining ratio is a result of debt growing slower than projected GDP. Gross Commonwealth debt is estimated at 31.2% of GDP in 2018-19. Net interest payments on debt is estimated at $14.5 billion in 2018-19, or about 3% of government expenditure (or 1% of GDP).
Australia has a much lower tax to GDP ratio than comparable countries of Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany, France, Japan, and Sweden (the black line is the OECD average); many of those countries have lower unemployment than Australia. The United States has lower taxes overall but a far greater fiscal deficit - it finances government with debt. In its 2018 budget, New Zealand achieves a fiscal surplus and continues to pay down debt, while increasing social and some infrastructure spending (Government of New Zealand, 2018). It can achieve this with a higher tax to GDP ratio than the “all-in” ratio for Australia, including its substantial GST with a high rate and broad base. High taxing countries such as Sweden and Denmark have significantly lower debt than Australia; they also have equal or higher GDP growth than Australia (OECD, nd).

The Commonwealth tax level exceeded 23.9% of GDP under the Howard-Costello government in several years during the 2000s. It seems likely we will need to increase our tax level somewhat in future, to ensure fairness and sufficient investment in Australia, in a changing and risky world with an ageing population.
**Budget economic parameters**

The economic parameters in the Budget feed into the revenue forecasts for the forward estimates (3 years after 2018-19). The Budget contains optimistic forecasts of GDP (rising from 2 ¾ % of GDP in 2017-18 to 3 % of GDP in future years.

Business investment forecasts are higher than last year, growing 4.5% of GDP in 2019-20, and wages are forecast to grow by 3.25% of GDP in 2019-20. These are substantially higher than the actual outcomes for 2016-19 (business investment at negative 4% of GDP and wages at 1.9% of GDP). Wage taxes are supported by higher labour market participation at 65.5% of the working age population. The Government also assumes that the rest of the world is growing faster than Australia (major trading partners at 4.25% of GDP), driven by growth in China and India.

As the personal income tax is our largest tax and most of it falls on wages, the forecast of wage growth is a critical parameter in the Budget. The budget forecast trend for the fiscal balance almost exactly tracks the budget forecasts for wages growth.

**Net operating balance and capital investment**

In its 2017-18 budget, the Government presented the accrual based “net operating balance” in the budget headline measures for the first time. This has been repeated in the current budget (Table 1 extracted above).

Net operating balance is an accrual measure that excludes, according to the Government’s definition, capital investment and is intended to highlight the ongoing management of "recurrent expenditure". The Government continues its approach from last year of stating (Budget Paper No.1, Statement 3, Box 7, 3-33):

"If government cannot meet recurrent spending from today's taxes then this spending must be funded by taking on public debt which will have to be funded by higher taxes in the future."

This budget does not expand capital spending but continues the "capital program" (described as large, but not particularly so) from the last budget. This more permissive approach to borrowing to fund capital investment is sensible in an era of low interest rates and a need for more infrastructure. It includes ongoing increases in the defence budget and spending on numerous road and rail projects around the country, as well as the new Sydney airport. Capital investment by the government is recorded in Budget Paper No. 1, Budget Statement 4:

- Direct investment in capital expenditure such as buildings, equipment and software (about $13.8 billion in 2017-18).
• Grants for capital purposes, including most of the road and rail projects (made directly to states), recorded as current expenditure for other purposes in the Budget.
• Investment in financial assets, which includes higher education concessional loans to students (counted as an asset, not expenditure, in the Budget).

It is sensible for the Commonwealth to allocate funds, including borrowing, to capital investment; however, many of the projects “capitalised” in the budget may never provide a financial return in a business sense, and are better considered with other government spending. As money is fungible, there is ultimately no justification for the allocation of debt to specific government departments or in such projects being presented as “off budget”.

A “tax cut” budget that reduces progressivity

Last year, the Budget contained policy measures that sought to raise revenue, including an increase in the Medicare Levy, the new Bank Levy, foreign visa worker levy and various integrity and base protection measures in the GST, company tax and personal income tax.

The Medicare levy rise was not passed by the Parliament and has been abandoned by the Government. The Major Bank Levy was introduced and is estimated to raise $1.15 billion in 2017-18, increasing to $1.9 billion in 2021-22. This year’s budget contains personal income tax cuts but does not contain broad-based tax reform. The tax cuts will benefit men more than women, on the whole, and permanently reduce progressivity in the income tax rate structure.

Enterprise Tax Plan - Company Tax Cut

Budget 2018-19 continues the Enterprise Tax Plan announced in the 2016-17 Budget, for which the tax cut from 30% to 25% for large corporations (to be phased in the decade to 2026-27) have not been passed by the Parliament. The company tax rate for small businesses is now 27.5% up to a turnover of $50 million.

The Government has announced more funds for the Australian Tax Office to carry out enforcement of business and individual taxation.

Gender implications

A strong and fiscally sustainable government to deliver public goods and social welfare is good for women. The accuracy and realism of fiscal forecasts matters to all Australians, men and women, as the budget should be transparent and present the real fiscal position of government.
It is good for all people, and women in particular, that the Government has accepted that core public funding is needed for what the Government calls essential services. However, the excessive constraints on government spending limit this commitment. The continued emphasis on fiscal discipline at all costs is at the expense of women who suffer more from cuts in social welfare, public expenditure on health, education, safety and the age pension, and those on low incomes.

The assumption that only capital expenditure delivers benefits over time is plainly wrong. Recurrent expenditure includes expenditure to prevent domestic violence, pay teachers and nurses, fund Newstart and family payments, fund vaccines and pay for courts and the justice system. Women and the broader population, and future economic prosperity, benefit from all these forms of public spending. To the extent that government insists on cutting or not increasing this spending where needed, this will negatively affect women.

The tax to GDP cap is a backward looking political measure that does not take seriously the need for increased government expenditure in future to support human capital and infrastructure investment, and health and social security expenditure. Tax reform to strengthen the tax base is crucial for longer term budget repair. This government continues the failure in tax reform across the board, which has been in the too hard box of four federal governments for the past eight years. It is critically important to prepare government finances for the period beyond 2025 when baby boomers start turning 80 years of age.

Our analysis in the 2017-18 Gender Lens remains relevant. If achieved, jobs and wages growth will benefit women; as noted, Australia’s unemployment level is higher than that in many other countries.

The fiscal cost of company tax cuts remains a concern without broader tax reform. At the same time, the Government proposes to tighten the conditions for the research and development tax concession, which is one way in which international and Australian companies reduce the level of corporate tax paid by investing in innovation. Some loopholes are being closed but tax planning will continue at this company tax rate.

The economic benefits of an across-the-board tax cut are contested. However, both the Government and the Opposition proposals for business taxation aim to lower taxes on businesses which increase investment in Australia. Both policies would have a fiscal cost. Opposition policy for an investment allowance and greater depreciation for investment in capital plant and equipment may more directly benefit male-dominated industries which have significant capital costs (such as mining or manufacturing) compared to female-dominated industries including services.
At the same time, the Government is seeking to increase enforcement to counter multinational transfer pricing and other tax planning techniques. We also expect a Digital Economy discussion paper in coming weeks, in which the government may propose a digital turnover tax on global digital businesses, as has been proposed in the UK.

References


1.2 Revenue

**Winners**
- Taxpayers reporting a taxable income less than $125,333 will be entitled to an annual lump sum tax offset from the 2018-19 tax year.
- From 1 July 2022 taxpayers reporting a taxable income higher than $90,000 will benefit from the flattening of the income tax rates.
- Small business will benefit from the extension of the $20,000 instant asset write-off.
- Vulnerable workers will benefit from the crackdown on the black economy.

**Lose**rs
- Low income earners who do not pay tax will not benefit from the reductions in personal income tax, and people earning less than $21,595 will not get the full benefit of the offset.
- Part time workers will face increased effective marginal tax rates as the offset is withdrawn over some income ranges.
- Willing participants in the black economy.

**The Budget**

**Taxation: Personal Income Tax Plan**

The headline measure for the 2018-19 budget is the restructuring of personal income tax rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Personal Income Tax Plan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-360.0</td>
<td>-4,120.0</td>
<td>-4,420.0</td>
<td>-4,500.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Personal Income Tax — increasing the Medicare levy low-income thresholds</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-80.0</td>
<td>-50.0</td>
<td>-50.0</td>
<td>-50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Personal Income Tax — retaining the Medicare levy rate at 2 per cent</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-400.0</td>
<td>-3,550.0</td>
<td>-4,250.0</td>
<td>-4,600.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget Paper No 2; Part 1 Revenue Measures

The first stage of the personal income tax plan is to introduce a new Low and Middle Income Tax Offset (LMITO) that will assist taxpayers earning less than $125,333 per annum. This is coupled with an uplift in the tax threshold for the 37% rate from $87,000 to $90,000. The offset is in addition to the existing low income tax offset (LITO), and has the following effect:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxable Income</th>
<th>LMITO</th>
<th>LITO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 18,200</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18,201 – 37,000</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37,001 – 48,000</td>
<td>Increases to $530</td>
<td>$445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48,001 – 90,000</td>
<td>$530 phases out at $66,667</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90,001 – 125,333</td>
<td>$530 phases out</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 125,334</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The LIMTO will be paid following lodgement of an income tax return, not with wages through reduced PAYG instalments.

Both the LITO and the LIMTO are non-refundable tax offsets, therefore a person with a tax liability lower than the amount they would be entitled to will not receive a cash refund. Therefore a person with a taxable income lower than $18,200 will not benefit from this measure, and a person with a taxable income below $21,595 will not receive the full benefit of the tax offsets.

The second and third stages of the income tax measures are not costed in the Budget as they will not take effect until after 1 July 2022. The plan will reduce the marginal tax rate payable by taxpayers with a taxable income of more than $90,000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range ($) for each Tax Rate</th>
<th>Tax Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1/7/17-30/6/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,201 – 37,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37,001 – 87,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>1/7/18-30/6/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,201 – 37,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37,001 – 90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37%</td>
<td>1/7/22-30/6/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,201 – 41,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41,001 – 120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>1/7/24 onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,201 – 41,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41,001 – 200,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Medicare Levy

The 2017-18 Budget proposed an increase in the level of the medicare levy from 2.0% to 2.5% to assist in the funding of the NDIS. This proposal has not passed into legislation, and the Government has abandoned the proposal as all planned Commonwealth expenditure on the NDIS will be able to be funded through the Budget.

The low income threshold for payment of the medicare levy will be indexed to exempt the lowest income earners from the levy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indexed threshold from 1 July 2018</th>
<th>Current Threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Pensioner or Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$34,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family (+ per child)</td>
<td>$48,385 (+$3,406)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$34,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family (+ per child)</td>
<td>$47,670 (+$3,356)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$21,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$37,089 (+$3,406)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$21,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$36,541 (+$3,356)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal Income Tax: ensuring individuals meet their tax obligations

The ATO has been allocated $130.8m to ensure that individuals and their tax agents comply with the tax laws, including underreported income and over claimed deductions. This will be achieved through a range of data matching, education and audit activities. This extends funding due to expire on 1 July 2018.
Taxation: Business Taxation

Budget 2018-19 incorporates the Enterprise Tax Plan announced in the 2016-17 budget which provided for a reduction in the corporate tax rate from 30% to 25% to be phased in over a 10 year period.

The proposed tax cuts have not been fully legislated by the Parliament. Tax cuts have been legislated for small companies with a turnover of less than $50m, which will reduce to 25% from 1 July 2027. Tax offsets are also available to unincorporated businesses with a turnover less than $5m per annum from 1 July 2018. This offset reduces the tax rate tax by 8%, increasing to 16% in 2026-27, by up to $1,000 per annum.

The instant asset write-off for assets costing less than $20,000 has been extended for a further 12 months at an estimated cost of $550m (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 20).

In the current budget the Government has announced a range of measures to protect the integrity of the taxation system, including:

- better targeting of the Research and Development tax offset based on the level of activity as a proportion of the company’s expenditure for the year (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 21);
- changes to the Thin Capitalisation rules to ensure that asset valuations used to calculate the amount that can be claimed for interest deductions are aligned with the values in the company’s financial statements (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 46); and
- changes to the taxation arrangements that apply to foreign investors investing in certain passive investments in Australia (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 38).

Taxation: Black Economy Package

The Budget includes a range of measures to combat illegal activities, including Phoenix companies and the Black Economy. The measures are in response to recommendations of the Report of the Black Economy Taskforce (Treasury, 2017).

The black economy includes transactions and activities conducted outside the applicable tax and regulatory systems, while phoenix activities refer to the activities of company directors who misuse the corporate structure to avoid paying debts, including tax and superannuation debts, by liquidating a company.

The ATO has been allocated funding to:

- Implement debt recovery strategies in relation to the collection of tax and superannuation debts (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 19)
- Reform taxation and corporations law to introduce new tools including offences and penalties to deter phoenix activity (Budget Paper No. 2, pp. 2, 37)
- Expand the taxable payments reporting system (TPRS) to contractors within the security industry, road freight providers and computer design and services. The TPRS is already in force within the building and construction and cleaning industries (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 22)
- Introduce a limit of $10,000 on cash payments, excluding financial transactions and non-business transactions between consumers (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 23)
- Fund increased ATO activity to replace funding due to expire on 30 June 2018 (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 23)
- Disallow tax deductions for wages where a business has not withheld the appropriate rate of tax from wages or contract payments where an ABN has not been supplied (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 23)
- Make technical amendments to the taxation of entities to limit the ability to alienate income and other forms of tax minimisation (Budget Paper No. 2, pp. 41-45)
- Create an illicit tobacco taskforce and tightening the payment and taxation controls. (Budget Paper 2, p 12.).

**Gender implications**

**Taxation: Personal Income Tax Plan**

Measures that reduce the tax payable by low income earners will disproportionately benefit women, as 85% of female taxpayers report taxable income of less than $90,000 per annum compared to 72% of male taxpayers (ATO, 2018).

However the tax offset increases the effective marginal tax rate by 1.5% for taxpayers within the taper zone, which increases work disincentives for women and other low income taxpayers. The potential to increase workforce participation by part time workers through a lower tax rate is therefore moderated by the effect of the taper rate.

The use of a tax offset to deliver benefits to lower income taxpayers introduces increased complexity to the system, particularly in the way in which the two tax offsets are layered and stepped with different withdrawal thresholds. The use of such tax offsets was considered in the Henry Review (2010), which recommended

'Recommendation 5: The Medicare levy and structural tax offsets – the low income, senior Australians, pensioner and beneficiary tax offsets – should be removed as separate components of the system and incorporated into the personal income tax rates scale. If a health levy is to be retained, it could be applied as a proportion of the net tax payable by an individual.'

A further flaw in the use of a tax offset is that it is only paid to the extent that a person is required to pay tax (excluding the medicare levy). Women who earn less than $18,200 are excluded from this measure as they do not pay tax, and between $18,201 and $21,595 they will not receive the full entitlement as the tax payable is less than $645.
The decision to pay this amount as an annual lump sum rebate following assessment of income tax is not consistent with the needs of low income families. Low income families are better served by receiving the benefit on a regular basis through reduced PAYG payments, particularly in a low wage growth environment. In order to meet the needs of low income families and to distribute the benefit to non-taxpayers, the benefit should be delivered as a transfer payment in conjunction with other benefits payable to low income earners (Hodgson & Boden, 2008).

The measures intended to take effect in stages two and three are described as addressing bracket creep and simplifying the system. However these measures are in fact a structural change to the progressivity of the tax system that benefits high income taxpayers (NATSEM, 2018). The budget papers note that this will create a flatter tax structure (Budget Paper No. 2, p. 33), which inherently reduces the progressivity of personal income tax rates. Modelling (Grattan, 2018) shows the effect in different tax brackets, but also shows that these measures do not fully adjust for bracket creep as average tax rates do still increase as income increases, although the rate of that increase is depressed.

The proposed flattening of the tax scales from 2022 will disproportionately benefit male taxpayers as the 28% of men who report taxable income of more than $90,000 is nearly double the 15% of women in the 37% and 45% tax brackets. In numerical terms, in the 2015-2016 income year, 662,716 women and 1,570,364 men had a taxable income exceeding $89,421; therefore 2.3 times as many men as women would have benefited from the reduction in the 37% tax rate to 32.5% (ATO, 2018).

Stages two and three are not costed as they are to be delivered after the period covered by budget estimates and projections. However the fiscal capacity to deliver tax cuts of this magnitude depends on the performance of the economy over the next five years. The tax cut is not accompanied with base broadening which had been recommended by the Henry Review (see section 1.1).

The abandonment of the proposed increase in the medicare levy is welcome as it would increase the average tax burden on most Australians and it also would act as an increase in the effective marginal tax rate. In the 2017 Gender Lens (NFAW, 2017, p. 39) we noted that a flat rate of increase across all tax brackets increased the burden on low income taxpayers, and recommended that the desired increase be obtained through other more progressive measures.

**Taxation: Business Taxation**

Our analysis of the corporate tax cuts in the 2016-17 Gender Lens remains relevant. If achieved, jobs and wages growth will benefit women. However the fiscal cost of company tax cuts remains a concern and the economic benefits are contested.
Both the Government and the Opposition proposals, including investment allowances or depreciation for capital investment, aim to lower taxes on businesses which increase investment in Australia. Both policies would have a fiscal cost. The Opposition policy for an investment allowance for investment in capital plant and equipment may more directly benefit male-dominated industries which have significant capital costs (such as mining or manufacturing) compared to female-dominated industries including services.

At the same time, the Government is seeking to increase taxes collected from large corporations including banks (through the Bank Levy) and through enforcement to counter multinational transfer pricing and other tax planning techniques. We also expect a digital economy discussion paper in coming weeks, in which the government may propose a digital turnover tax on global digital businesses, as has been proposed in the UK.

**Taxation: Black Economy Package**

The tax system needs to be strong and comprehensive to raise the funds required to provide services.

Women are the beneficiaries of the services that the Government provides, and it is in the interests of women to ensure that the tax system functions as intended.

People vulnerable to being exploited by the black economy include migrant and CALD workers, visa holders and people employed in industries where sham contracts are prevalent, including the NDIS, cleaning and security industries (see section 4.2 - workforce programs).

Vulnerable workers are liable to be paid at rates below the relevant award or minimum wage as well as losing entitlements to superannuation, workers compensation and leave.

It is in the interest of a fair and just community to protect vulnerable workers by proactively pursuing measures to combat the black economy.
**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 11**

- NFAW recommends that the LITO and the LITMO be converted to a transfer payment available to low and middle-income earners in conjunction with other payments, instead of being delivered to low and middle-income taxpayers through the tax system.

**Recommendation 12**

- NFAW recommends that, because the second and third stages of the personal income tax plan are regressive, they should not proceed.

**Recommendations 13**

- NFAW recommends that bracket creep should be addressed by reviewing the tax rate thresholds.

**References**


NATSEM 2018, *How Does the Budget Affect Us* National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM), University of Canberra


**1.3 Superannuation**

**Winners**

- The primary beneficiaries of this package will be low balance members and those with lost and inactive superannuation.

**Losers**

- There was no additional funding for the ATO to engage in superannuation compliance beyond the rollover of funding for the ATO to pursue unpaid superannuation tax. Non-payment or underpayment of the Superannuation Guarantee is an issue of particular relevance to women in low paid, casual work.
- New mothers on the Paid Parental Leave scheme, which continues to omit superannuation.
The Budget

Opt-in life insurance for certain cohorts of members

Protecting Your Super Package — changes to insurance in superannuation

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<td>16.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget paper No.2, p.36

This measure changes the superannuation arrangements for certain cohorts of superannuation measures. Insurance from superannuation will move from being a default to being offered on an opt-in basis for the following cohorts:

- Members with balances of less than $6,000;
- Members under 25 years of age; and
- Members whose accounts have not received a contribution in 13 months and are inactive.

This measure takes effect from 1 July 2019 and is expected to have a gain to the Budget of $697 million over the forward estimates.

Capping fees, banning exit fees and consolidating multiple accounts

Protecting Your Super Package — capping passive fees, banning exit fees and reuniting small and inactive superannuation accounts

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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget paper No.2, p.35

This measure does three things: it introduces a 3% annual cap on passive fees charged by superannuation funds on accounts with balances below $6,000; it bans exit fees on all superannuation accounts; and it introduces a requirement for funds to transfer inactive superannuation accounts to the
ATO where the balance of any account is below $6,000. In turn, the ATO will expand its data matching processes to consolidate these accounts with low balance with a person’s active superannuation account, where possible.

These measures will take effect on 1 July 2019 and are expected to have a gain to the Budget of $166.6 million in fiscal balance terms and a gain of $1.1 billion in underlying cash balance terms, over the forward estimates.

**Relaxation of the work test rules**

*More Choices for a Longer Life — work test exemption for recent retirees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue ($m)</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
<th>2021-22</th>
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<td>-3.0</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget paper No.2, p.30

This measure introduces an exemption from the work test for voluntary contributions to superannuation made by people aged 65 to 74 with superannuation balances of less than $300,000 in the first year that they do not meet the work test requirements. The work test currently restricts the ability to make voluntary superannuation contributions to those aged 65 to 74 who self-report as working a minimum of 40 hours in any 30-day period in the one financial year.

This measure takes effect on 1 July 2019 and will have a cost of $10 million over the forward estimates period.

**Deductions for contributions**

*Superannuation — better integrity over deductions for personal contributions*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Revenue ($m)</th>
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</tr>
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</table>

Source: Budget paper No.2, p.39

Under this measure, the Government is providing $3.1 million to the ATO over the forward estimates to improve the integrity of the ‘notice of intent’ (NOI) processes for claiming personal superannuation contribution tax deductions. The ATO will modify income tax returns to alert individuals to the NOI requirements with a tick box to confirm they have complied.

Currently, some individuals receive deductions on their personal superannuation contributions but do not submit a NOI, despite the requirement to do so. This results in superannuation funds not applying
the appropriate 15% tax to their contributions. With the contribution having been deducted from the individual’s income, no tax is paid on it all.

This measure commences on 1 July 2018 and is estimated to have a gain to revenue of $430 million over the forward estimates through increased compliance and therefore tax collections.

### Preventing inadvertent breaches of annual concessional contributions cap

**Superannuation — preventing inadvertent concessional cap breaches by certain employees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue ($m)</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
<th>2021-22</th>
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<td>1.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget paper No.2, p.40

This measure permits individuals whose income exceeds $263,157 and who have multiple employers to nominate that their wages from certain employers are not subject to the Superannuation Guarantee (SG) from 1 July 2018. This measure is introduced to avoid having those individuals unintentionally breaching the $25,000 annual contributions cap as a result of multiple compulsory SG contributions.

The measure is estimated to have a gain to revenue of $2 million over the forward estimates, based on employees using this measure to negotiate to receive additional income which is then taxed at marginal rates.

### Superannuation fund trustee duties — retirement income strategy and product disclosure

**More Choices for a Longer Life — comprehensive income products in retirement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense ($m)</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
<th>2021-22</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget paper No.2, p.185

This measure introduces a requirement for superannuation fund trustees to formulate a retirement income strategy for members, and introduces a requirement for providers of retirement income products to prepare their Product Disclosure Statements in standardised and simplified format.
Up to six SMSF member-trustees

Superannuation — increasing the maximum number of allowable members in self-managed superannuation funds and small APRA funds from four to six

Revenue ($m)

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</table>

Source: Budget paper No.2, p.40

From 1 July 2019, self-managed superannuation funds will be allowed to have six member-trustees. Currently they can only have four.

Simplified audits for SMSF trustees

Superannuation — three-yearly audit cycle for some self-managed superannuation funds

Revenue ($m)

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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget paper No.2, p.41

From 1 July 2019 the annual audit requirement for SMSF trustees will change to a three-yearly if they have a history of good record-keeping and compliance.

Rollover of funding for ATO to pursue unpaid superannuation tax

A firm stance on tax and superannuation debts

Revenue ($m)

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<td>152.2</td>
<td>156.0</td>
<td>159.8</td>
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</table>


Under this measure, the Government is providing $133.7 million to the ATO to pursue unpaid tax, including unpaid superannuation taxation. The measure is expected to have a gain to the Budget of $1.2 billion over the forward estimates period, and to increase GST payments to the states and territories by $483.7 million over the forward estimates. A related measure under the Black Economy package
includes funding for anti-phoenixing measures, which can see a company leave unpaid Superannuation Guarantee contributions.

**Gender implications**

Women stand to be the beneficiaries of measures contained in the *Protecting Your Super Package* that are directed at low balance superannuation members, on account of women’s lower average wages and lower superannuation balances. Specifically, these are the measure to consolidate accounts; to limit fees on accounts with balances of less than $6,000; and to ban exit fees and opt-in life insurance for accounts with balances of less than $6,000.

Older women who cease gainful employment will now be able to make a further contribution to superannuation, with the relaxation of the work test. This will allow the income on investing that amount to be concessional taxed under the superannuation regime.

It is positive that the Government has made no change to the scheduled increase to the Superannuation Guarantee. On the current timetable, the Superannuation Guarantee will increase to 10% in 2020-21, and to 12% in 2024-25.

While this budget made no changes to superannuation taxation, further to those made in Budget 2016-17, the changes to income tax rates proposed in Budget 2018-19 will impact on superannuation. Under the progressive tax system, the flat rate of 15% tax on superannuation contributions and earnings becomes more concessional, the more a person earns.

As a result, lowering and flattening the income tax system as proposed by Budget 2018-19 will have the effect of reducing superannuation tax concessionality for middle and higher income groups. In turn, this will benefit women on account of their higher representation in low income tax brackets.

The gender benefit of the income tax changes on superannuation tax concessions needs to be weighed against the overall effect of the proposed income tax changes. Tranches two and three of the proposed income tax system, which would take effect in 2022-23 and 2024-25 respectively, will permanently remove the intermediate 37% marginal tax rate, making the structure permanently less progressive. Doing so will disproportionately favour high income earners, the majority of whom are men (Grattan Institute 2018, Centre for Social Research and Methods 2018).

Employees must still earn $450 per month from an employer in order to receive compulsory Superannuation Guarantee contributions, disadvantaging many women with low incomes and multiple jobs.
The Budget contains no measures to assist women build their superannuation while transitioning in and out of paid work.

Finally, there is no additional funding for the ATO to engage in superannuation compliance beyond the rollover of funding for the ATO to pursue unpaid superannuation tax. Non-payment or underpayment of the Superannuation Guarantee is an issue of particular relevance to women in low paid, casual work.

The Black Economy measures in the Budget have the potential to address a range of issues affecting vulnerable workers, by shining a spotlight on cash payments. These issues include underpayment of wages and non-payment of superannuation. A detailed discussion of the Black Economy measures is contained in the taxation section of the Gender Lens.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 14**
- NFAW recommends that detailed analysis be undertaken to understand the gender impact of the Budget 2018-19 income tax changes on superannuation tax.

**Recommendation 15**
- NFAW recommends that further funding be provided to the ATO to monitor and prosecute superannuation non-compliance.

**Recommendation 16**
- NFAW recommends that the $450 per month earnings threshold for Superannuation Guarantee payments be removed.

**Recommendation 17**
- NFAW recommends that the Superannuation Guarantee be paid by the Government on its Paid Parental Leave scheme.

**References**


2. SOCIAL SERVICES

2.1 Payment integrity and adequacy

**Winners**
- Centrelink customers will experience a decline in excessive call waiting times.
- The delivery of payments to job seekers, older Australians, carers and people with disabilities will be improved by the implementation of more efficient and automated claim systems.
- There will be no further crackdown on family and sole parent payments.

**Losers**
- Newstart, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment and family payment recipients who received no improvement in the adequacy of their income support payments. This is likely to result in increased incidence of family violence, homelessness, and negative impacts on mental and physical health, particularly for those affected by the continuing welfare crackdown.
- Some recipients will have their payments reduced or cancelled: those facing investigation or a court case; already paying off debts but considered to have a greater capacity to pay; with outstanding arrest warrants for indictable criminal offences; or who have outstanding state / territory court-imposed fines.
- Recipients affected by the extension of the cashless debit card trial.

**The Budget**

**Encouraging Lawful Behaviour of Income Support Recipients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense ($m)</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
<th>2021-22</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget statement No. 2, p. 178

The Australian Government will establish a scheme which it argues is designed to encourage lawful behaviour from income support recipients. Under the scheme, the Commonwealth will be able to make compulsory deductions from the welfare payments of serial fine defaulters who have outstanding state and territory court-imposed fines.

The Commonwealth will also be able to suspend or cancel the welfare payments of individuals who have outstanding state and territory arrest warrants for indictable criminal offences.
The scheme will require recipients to meet their obligations under state and territory laws, and is aimed at ensuring those avoiding justice are not being supported by taxpayer funds.

Financial implications for this measure are not for publication (nfp) as the scheme is subject to negotiation with the states and territories.

### Social Welfare Debt Recovery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense (m$)</th>
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<th>2019-20</th>
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The Australian Government will achieve savings of $299.3 million over three years from 2019–20 by extending the Department of Human Services’ (DHS) fraud detection and debt recovery activities.

From 1 July 2019, DHS will focus debt recovery activities on ex-recipient debtors with high value debts not in a payment arrangement, and ex-recipient debtors in a payment arrangement but with an identified capacity to pay more. From 1 July 2021, DHS will extend data matching activities with the Australian Taxation Office. This measure builds on previous measures to “improve welfare payment integrity”, supporting these activities until 30 June 2022.

The savings from this measure will be redirected by the Government to repair the Budget and fund policy priorities.

### Extending the Cashless Debit Card Trial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense (m$)</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
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</table>

The Australian Government will extend the cashless debit card trial in Ceduna (South Australia) and East Kimberley (Western Australia) for one year to 30 June 2019. The Government will also undertake an additional independent evaluation of the cashless debit card trial.
The expenditure for this measure is not for publication (nfp) as negotiations with potential commercial providers are yet to be finalised. This measure extends the 2017-18 Budget measure titled *Extension and expansion of Cashless Debit Card*.

**Gender implications**

Women are over-represented at the lowest income levels. DSS demographic data for September 2017 demonstrated that there are more women than men in 21 of the 27 payments listed. Approximately 60% of all recipients are women.

Despite concerted calls for some time to address the inadequacy of Newstart and Youth Allowances, the payments remain unchanged. Similarly payments to sole parents and family payments remain inadequate.

The integrity of the payment system is obviously important. However, the harshest changes in the Budget affect the most vulnerable. The continuing punitive crackdown on welfare compliance - on top of 'robodebt' measures, drug testing, and blanket income management - is exacerbating the effectiveness of the social safety net for people already living below the poverty line. It also stigmatises recipients unfairly.

The extension of the cashless debit card trial is occurring despite a lack of evidence that it has been successful. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women report that it results in an increase in social exclusion, stigma and difficulty in providing for family needs.

Many women also reported an increase in stress levels, shame and powerlessness. They also felt less safe because of an increase in crime due to a lack of cash.

Attacks on the social security system weaken the redistributive strength of the Australian tax/ benefit system.
Recommendations

Recommendation 18

- NFAW recommends that the Government index working age payments to movements in wages.

Recommendation 19

- NFAW recommends that the Government increase the level of Commonwealth rent assistance.

Recommendation 20

- NFAW recommends that the Government reinstate the budget table outlining projected changes to real disposable incomes and net tax thresholds of different household types, formally contained in Appendix C of the Budget Overview.

2.2 Housing and homelessness

Winners

- Negatively geared investors.
- Housing policy-makers and advocates in want of up-to-date data.
- Social Impact investing sector.

Losers

- 185,284 applicants waiting for social housing.
- Commonwealth Rent Assistance recipients.
- 116,427 people experiencing homelessness.

The Budget

Housing - Federal Financial Relations

The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA)

The NHHA is the premier Commonwealth funding agreement for social housing and homelessness services. Bringing together the previous National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), the NHHA guarantees indexed funding to states and territories until 2022. The funding totals approximately $1.5 billion a year, maintaining the funding levels under the NAHA and NPAH. This funding is matched by states and provisioned through amendments to the Federal Financial Relations Act 2009 (FFR ACT).
Housing and homelessness policy is marginalised in Budget 2018-2019. An insufficient funding envelope trundles along in the form of the $1.5 billion NHHA without new capital funding or renewed focus. This continues a dangerous but long-running pattern of inattention, inaction and, ultimately, neglect for housing affordability and homelessness funding.

Federal funding for social housing and homelessness services has flatlined while demand for affordable housing has escalated. Within this quantum of funding, successive governments have overseen a worsening housing crisis. The number of households waiting for social housing has climbed to 185,284 (Productivity Commission(a), 2018). And, it is estimated that nearly 900,000 households satisfy the income eligibility requirements for public housing (Wood and Ong, 2016). Every day there are 261 requests to specialist homelessness services that are unable to be met (AIHW, 2018).

People on low-incomes are increasingly exposed to the caprice of the private rental market, with 44.2% of people below the poverty line living in private rental housing (ACOSS, 2016). Nationally, the proportion of low-income tenants in rental stress has risen from 35% to 44% over the last decade (Pawson and Parsell, 2018).

This stagnation of funding is set against a backdrop of decades-long underinvestment. In 2001, Commonwealth funding for public housing had fallen by 22% in the ten preceding years (Hall and Berry, 2004, p. iv). Chronic underfunding has seen public housing fall from a 4.8% proportion of overall housing in 2006 to 4.3% in 2016 (AHURI, 2017). Any boost to federal housing and homelessness funding over the years has been sporadic, such as the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing in 2009 and additional capital funding in 2013 for the NPAH. On the whole, the funding limitations of the NHHA systematise a shortfall in social housing and restricted capacity for homelessness services to meet demand.
There is a chronic shortage in available and affordable housing for people on low incomes. Research from AHURI suggests that the shortfall in affordable and available rental dwellings for quintile 1 households is 271,000 (Hulse et al, 2015, p.52). Calculations from Yates suggest that the construction of 20,000 affordable rental dwellings a year would tread water on the current shortage limiting ‘the extent to which the current supply shortage for the most disadvantaged household will increase’ (CEDA, 2017, p.29). This is a shortage that is only projected to deteriorate without serious intervention and upscaling in capital funding and focus from government.

Budget 2018-19 is a missed opportunity for real action on housing affordability and signals an unwillingness to raise the revenue for Australia’s current and future housing needs.

**National Partnership Agreement on Remote Housing (NPRH)**

The NPRH supports the delivery of new houses, housing, refurbishments and housing-related infrastructure.

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<th>National Partnership on Remote Housing</th>
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A lack of agreement between the Federal government and QLD, WA and SA governments has seen a significant reduction in funding for the NPRH. Long-term, sustained funding for remote, Indigenous housing from federal and state governments is critical for maintaining momentum to improve housing outcomes and address gaps (Habibis, Phibbs and Phillips, 2018). Access to affordable, stable, quality housing is linked to the social and cultural determinants of health (Dick and Calma, 2007).

The review of the Partnership Agreement on Remote Housing, released in 2017, has recommended a recurrent program be funded to maintain existing houses, preserve functionality and increase the life of housing assets. Additionally the report has called for increased investment for an additional 5500 houses by 2028 and that costs of remote housing be equally shared between the Commonwealth and the jurisdictions (Towart et al, 2017, p.4).

**National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC)**

The NHFIC is a welcome initiative from the 2017-18 Budget. The announcement late last year of a government guarantee has further solidified the bond aggregator’s potential to raise institutional funds for the purpose of affordable housing (Lawson, Pawson and Milligan, 2017). $500,000 allocated in
Budget 18-19 to support the review of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing will ensure a nationally consistent approach to community housing regulation and shore up investor confidence.

However, Budget 2018-2019 has missed an important opportunity to build on this momentum with further subsidies to bridge the funding gap and guarantee the bond aggregator’s viability (Lawson, 2017). The funding gap is the gap between operating costs for community and affordable housing providers and rental incomes/revenue streams. The size of this gap increases depending on where tenants sit along the housing continuum. The lower the income profile, the greater the support required from governments (Council on Federal Financial Relations, 2017, p.2). Additional resourcing to cover the funding gap must underpin the bond aggregator, ensuring lower income households have access to housing generated.

The Affordable Housing Working Group (through the Australian Government Council on Federal Financial Relations), has recommended Commonwealth and state and territory governments progress initiatives aimed at closing the funding gap including through examining the levels of direct subsidy needed for affordable low-income rental housing (Council on Federal Financial Relations, 2017, p.2).

**Commonwealth Rent Assistance**

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is a $4.5 billion income supplement paid to 1.3 million income units residing in the private rental market or community housing. CRA predominates as the major form of housing assistance for tenants, signaling a government embrace of the private rental market for people in housing need.

Both the base rate and indexation levels of CRA are inadequate and unresponsive to the realities of the rental market. The ineffectiveness of CRA results in a high failure rate for the program, with 41.6% of recipients remaining in housing stress after receiving CRA.

From 2013 to 2017, the proportion of income units receiving CRA paying enough rent to be eligible for maximum assistance has risen from 76.1% to 79.8% (Productivity Commission(a), 2018). According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the median CRA payment in June 2016 was $130 and the median rent was $437 per fortnight (AIHW(a), 2017). Anglicare Australia’s 2018 Rental Affordability Snapshot has found that the number of affordable and available rental properties for people on income support payments is negligible; out of 67,000 rental listings nationwide, only 485 were found to be affordable for a single person on the disability support pension and 180 for a single parent with on child on Newstart (Anglicare Australia, 2018, p.4).
Individualised assistance for people in housing need is an important component of an effective housing system, in concert with social and affordable housing. Recommendations from the Productivity Commission’s Human Services Inquiry to replace income-based rent setting in public housing with market-based rents and an increased CRA (Productivity Commission(b), 2018; 193) should therefore be resisted.

CRA forms part of a wholly inadequate income support system - a key factor in the increasing numbers of people losing their housing (Launch Housing, 2018; 49). It is in need of reset and restructure to ensure people in housing need are adequately supported. This requires an increase to the base rate of CRA and a change in indexation from CPI to movements in rental markets. The CPI indexation has seen rental increases far outpace the level of CRA (National Welfare Rights Network, 2014, p.3).

**Housing Statistics and Data**

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**Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute — National Housing Research Program**

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An increase in funding to build and maintain an evidence base on housing affordability is a welcome measure that will produce much-needed data and research to inform policy. The funding to improve housing related data goes some way to filling the gap left with the abolition of the National Housing Supply Council in 2013.
Social Impact Investing

National Partnerships on Social Impact Investments

Youth at risk of homelessness\(^{(a)}\)

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\(^{(a)}\) State allocations from 2019–20 have not yet been determined.

Vulnerable priority groups\(^{(a)}\)

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\(^{(a)}\) State allocations from 2019–20 have not yet been determined.


Funding has been allocated to states and territories for social impact investing trials. Social impact investing is in its infancy in Australia but yields great potential to generate housing stock and tailor service provision (Muir et al, 2017, pp. 3-4).

Gender implications

Women are the primary beneficiaries of housing assistance and support, forming the majority of people accessing and using these systems and services.

Across all social housing programs, women make up 61% of main tenants (AIHW, 2017a). This gendered pattern of tenancy reflects access barriers for women in the housing market and reveals the level of need for gender-responsive affordable housing solutions. When housing systems are overstretched as a result of chronic under-investment, women and their families are disproportionately impacted and, ultimately, efforts towards gender equality are undermined.

Women’s experiences and demographics shape housing needs and access, for example:

- Feminised poverty sees women over-represented in key poverty indicators (ACOSS, 2016, p.14).
- Women live longer compared to men and on less with 34% of older women in permanent income poverty (AIHW, 2017b; Feldman and Radermacher, 2016).
- Caring responsibilities often dictate the type of housing that women need. Eighty two per cent of single parent families are headed by women (ABS, 2018a).
Domestic and family violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and their families (AIHW, 2018).

Without adequate, affordable, accessible and appropriate long-term housing available, women are increasingly vulnerable to homelessness. The 2016 Census data reveal that there are 49,017 females experiencing homelessness making up 42% of people experiencing homelessness in Australia (ABS, 2018b). From 2011 to 2016, there has been a 51.1% increase in the numbers of women aged 65-74 counted in the Census homelessness data (AHURI, 2018). Since 2011-12, there has been a 4% annual average increase in the number of people approaching specialist homelessness services (AIHW, 2018).

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the average annual increase for many specific groups of women approaching homelessness services is greater than the 4% for the mainstream homelessness population. For females who have experienced domestic and family violence it is 7.3%, for Indigenous females it is 8.2%, for older women (55+) it is 11% and for females with a disability it is 15.4%. Moreover, the majority (66%) of unassisted requests for service from specialist homelessness providers come from women. Without an increase in capital funding for the NHHA, the $1.5 billion in federal funds locks in a future of housing failure and insecurity for women. The existing gaps, seen in the previously mentioned social housing wait lists and homelessness service turn away rates, cannot be addressed without significant additional funding, particularly for long-term housing solutions.

This calls for a reprioritisation and redirection of federal housing funding. While estimates vary, the Parliamentary Budget Office posits that the budget impact of negative gearing is at least $2 billion. Compare this to the $1.5 billion allocated to the NHHA. The gendered implications of this resource distribution point to the inequities at the heart of housing policy: “the typical negatively-geared investor is male, aged in his mid-to-late forties; employed full-time and has a tax assessable income of $91,000” (Duncan et al, 2018) on the other hand, the typical social housing tenant is a woman. In public housing she is a woman over 55 and living alone. In State Owned and Managed Indigenous housing, she is a woman aged 25-54 with dependent children. And in community housing, she is a woman over 45 and living alone (AIHW, 2017a).

Looking at individualised housing assistance, women are disproportionately impacted by the inadequacy of CRA. Single women make up the largest proportion of CRA recipients, comprising 45% of the 1.3 million income units in receipt of CRA. Single men account for 30% and couples 25% (Senate Community Affairs Committee, 2015).

More single women are paying enough rent to receive the maximum rate of CRA (78.9% as a proportion of single women in receipt of CRA - 479,291), compared to single men receiving the maximum rate
(69.9% as a proportion of single men - 277,687) (Senate Community Affairs Committee, 2015). Single, older women in the private rental market are at an increased risk of homelessness (McFerran, 2010, p.39). Eighteen per cent of people in receipt of CRA are in receipt of the age pension. There are 113,705 single women on the age pension in receipt of CRA and 67,830 single men in the same situation (Senate Community Affairs Committee, 2015). The housing precariousness of this demographic is brought into sharp relief with Anglicare Australia’s Rental Snapshot findings. Of the 67,365 rental listings surveyed by Anglicare in 2018, only 1.24% nationwide were affordable for a single age pensioner (Anglicare Australia, 2018, p.4).

There are some welcome measures contained within the 2018-2019 Budget. The National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation continues to hold great promise for increasing the stock of affordable housing. The investment in housing statistics and research addresses some of the most problematic gaps in housing supply data. Overall, however, this housing budget is business as usual. With women’s economic security on the agenda, a bold change in housing tack is needed.

**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 21**

NFAW recommends that a comprehensive gender-responsive national housing strategy is developed. An effective national strategy should set ambitious goals to reduce homelessness and increase affordable housing stock. Such a strategy should also tackle the policy incongruities that plague current policy settings. A gender-responsive strategy would include the principles of visibility, capability and accountability. Visibility ensures that women in their diversity are named and included. Capability ensures that housing systems are adequately resourced to meet the housing needs of women in their diversity. And accountability would ensure that such a policy included gender indicators in the performance framework. Australia should seek guidance from Canada’s National Housing Strategy, which has quarantined 25% of its funding for projects and services that directly address the needs of women and their families (Government of Canada, 2018, p.11).

The key components of a national strategy should:

- reform tax settings to curb negative gearing and reduce the capital gains tax exemption;
- improve Commonwealth Rent Assistance to better meet the needs of renters;
- increase capital funding through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement;
- ensure long-term, sustainable and certain funding for remote housing;
- determine and implement a public subsidy and/or direct government investment to support the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation.
References


3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.1 Child care

**Winners**
- Families with household incomes of $180,000 or less, who will no longer be capped on the annual subsidy they receive.
- Families with household incomes of between $65,000 and $180,000, who will see an increase in the rate of subsidy they receive.

**Losing**
- Families with household incomes of above $65,000 who have a stay-at-home parent, who will no longer be eligible for any child care subsidy.
- Children from vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds, who will see their access to subsidised early learning halved from 24 hours a week to 12 hours.

**The Budget**

The Government will spend just over $3.7 billion over the forward estimates delivering their new “Jobs for Families” childcare subsidy package. Due to start on 2 July 2018, the new Child Care Subsidy (CCS) will replace the current Child Care Rebate (CCR) and Child Care Benefit (CCB) subsidies.

This new subsidy will be based on a set hourly rate capped at: $11.77/hr for centre-based day care, $10.90/hr for family day care and $10.29 for outside school hours care.

There will be a sliding scale based on total household income, available only to those families who meet the new eligibility requirements from:
- 85% for households on $66,958 or less,
- 85-50% for households on $66,958-$171,958
- 50% for households on $171,958-$251,248
- 20% for households on $251,248-$341,248
- 0% for households on over $351,248.

The current annual $7,613 subsidy cap will be scrapped for families on incomes less than $180,000 and increased to $10,000 for eligible families on over $180,000.

Families on incomes less than $66,958 won’t need to meet the activity test, however they will only have access to 12 hours of subsidised early learning per week. The current minimum is 24 hours a week.

---

3 New eligibility requirements - The Activity Test - both parents need to be working, studying or volunteering for a minimum of 8 hours per fortnight to be eligible for the subsidy.
With the increase in reporting based on hours of childcare used plus hours of activity the Government has allocated $1.72 million over the forward estimates for administrative and IT system.

The total budget for the new subsidy system is $3.5 billion over the forward estimates.

Table 2.1.1: Budgeted expenses for Outcome 1

Outcome 1: Improved early learning, schooling, student educational outcomes and transitions to and from school through access to quality child care, support, parent engagement, quality teaching and learning environments.

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<td>Program 1.1: Support for the Child Care System</td>
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<tr>
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<td>339,737</td>
<td>342,216</td>
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<td>339,737</td>
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<td>Program 1.4: Child Care Subsidy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special appropriations A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999</td>
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Source: Budget Paper No. 1.5, Table 2.1.1, p.23.
Budget Paper No. 1.5: Portfolio Budget Statements 2018-19, Education and Training Portfolio

**Gender implications**

Access to affordable early learning and care has a significant impact on women's participation in the paid workforce.

The cost of early learning and care (or better known as child care) has long had a significant impact on new mothers seeking to return to paid work following the birth of their child (Productivity Commission, 2014).

Currently, there are about 54% of women with children under the age of four participating in paid work, majority of them in part-time or casual employment. This compares to 94% of fathers of young children, 85% of whom are in full time work (OECD Family Database LMF 1.2, Maternal Employment charts).

Whilst having children has little to no impact on employment for men, motherhood decreases the likelihood of being in paid work dramatically, with the participation rate for women in Australia significantly less than many OECD countries including the UK, USA, Canada and Denmark (Standing Committee on Family and Human Services, 2006).

In Australia, mothers generally return to the workforce when their children reach school age. The workforce participation rate of Australian mothers with school aged children slightly above the OECD average.
Years of successive increases in childcare fees coupled with little to no movement in government support to meet fee increases has resulted in many parents, particularly mothers, being forced to remain at home with a child until that child reaches school age.

**Reducing the out-of-pocket cost for early learning and care will reduce a significant barrier to paid employment for many women.**

Whilst the new subsidy system will increase the Government’s percentage contribution to the daily fees, what will likely have the most significant impact on the workforce participation rate for mothers will be the scrapping of the subsidy cap from $7,600 to nothing for families earning less than $180,000 and increasing the cap to $10,000 a year per child for families earning above $180,000.

Currently, many women are in effect forced to keep to only two to three days a week of work due to the prohibitive cost of early learning and care and the subsidy cap.

Many families using early learning and care full-time very quickly reach their yearly subsidy cap and are forced to pay full fees for the remainder of the year until it is reset at the end of year financial year. With some reaching their cap as early has half way through the year and forced to pay full fees, upwards of $150 to $200 a day, for many it becomes impossible to have their children in full time care and the result for a parent is reversion back to part-time or casual paid employment.

Surveys show that the parent most likely to take on the part-time role or increased flexible working arrangements is mum (The Parenthood, 2014). Having no cap or up to $10,000 of subsidised early learning will have a significant impact on women seeking to be in paid work full- or close to full-time.

**Negative consequences of the new strict activity test will have a greater impact on women.**

One of the significant negative implications of the Government’s new child care package is the new strict eligibility requirement or activity test parents will need to meet in order to receive the subsidy.

There will be some single income families with a stay at home parent, who for the first time will miss out entirely on access to subsidised early learning for their child/ren.

The new activity test requires that each parent must be in some level of paid work, study or approved volunteer activity, to be eligible to receive the subsidy with the number of hours of subsidised early learning linked to the number of hours of activity. This new activity test will have an impact on families who have parents in irregular, casual or insecure work and will be especially difficult for single parent
families. Accordingly, this new activity test is likely to have a greater impact on women, either as single parents, stay at home parents, or those in irregular, insecure work.

**Reduced subsidy rate for higher income families may impact on decisions on re-entering the paid workforce**

The cost of child care remains the cost of mum going back to work.

For families with household incomes above $180,000 the rate of subsidy for early learning and care will gradually reduce from the current universal 50% rate to nothing for families on incomes above $350,000.

While out-of-pocket costs for early learning and care can be prohibitive for lower income families, increasing the out-of-pocket costs could create a financial disincentive for higher income families where a decision will be made around whether or not it’s worth the second income earner’s going back to work.

Australian Bureau of Statistics research into the barriers for women entering the paid workforce clearly highlights the out-of-pocket costs of early learning and care as key obstacles to women either entering the workforce or seeking to increase their hours (ABS, 2013).

The Productivity Commission found that secondary income earners, usually mothers, are faced with very high effective marginal tax rates. Accordingly, reducing the early learning and care subsidy and therefore increasing the out-pocket-costs for higher income families could increase the financial disincentive for mum to go back to work or work more.

Even taking into account other factors such as the proposed flattening of the tax system, the reduced subsidy rate could make it more cost effective for the women in families to remain at home instead of returning to work.
**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 22**

NFAW recommends that the Australian Government amend its “Jobs for Families, Child Care Package” to ensure every child, irrespective of their parents’ work circumstances receive access to at least two days (24 hours) of subsidised early learning a week. This maintains continuous access to early learning and care for all children, especially those from vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds and provides certainty for parents, in particular mothers, who even if they experience a sudden or significant change in their working or earning capacity, know they will always be able to count on access to two full days of subsidised child care.

**3.2 Early education and schools**

**Winners**

- Those supporting funding for Gonski 2.0 - by aligning funding with the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and delivering $24.5 billion.
- Private schools’ representatives receiving $125 million to support “the implementation of the Government's agenda”.
- Disadvantaged students in regional and remote areas, who receive a 5% increase in loading.
- Indigenous students in the NT who receive increased funding of $134.3 million.
- Pre-school students who receive an increase of $429.4 million.
- Those supporting the expanded chaplains’ programme in schools which will receive $247 million over 4 years.
- People wanting to become a teacher through the High Achieving Teachers Program.
- Those who believe in Early Learning Languages Australia, which will have continued funding for preschool services and a trial in schools from Foundation to Year 2 students.
- Those who support early childhood education, which will see an extension of the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education for another year with $440 million.
- Students who participate in the Sporting Schools and Local Sporting Champions Programs receiving $154 million.
- Students receiving the MoneySmart Teaching Program receiving $1.3 million.
- Adelaide public servants who will be able to join the relocated Unique Student Identifiers function with its relocation from Canberra.

**Losers**

- Those wanting to see a fully funded public education sector.
- Those wanting to see education and schooling as central to the Government’s programme for the 21st century.
- Those supporting highly qualified school counsellors and child psychologists.
- Those wanting pre-school education to be fully integrated and part of the schooling system.
- Those who believe the funding for Gonski 2.0 is inadequate.
- State governments who will have to make up the shortfall for schools to reach the full SRS.
The Budget

Table 1.2: Department of Education and Training 2018-19 Budget measures

Part 1: Measures announced since the 2017-18 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education — additional support for students (a)</th>
<th>2.4</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>Early Learning Languages Australia — expansion</td>
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Budget Related Paper No. 15, pp. 16, 17

Program expenses 1.5 Government Schools National Support

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<th>2017-18 Estimated actual $'000</th>
<th>2018-19 Budget $'000</th>
<th>2019-20 Forward estimate $'000</th>
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<td>Other services ( Appropriation Bill No. 2)</td>
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Budget Related Paper No. 15, p. 32
Program Expenses 1.6 Non-Government Schools National Support

<table>
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<th>2018–19 Budget $'000</th>
<th>2019–20 Forward estimate $'000</th>
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<td>12,452,819</td>
<td>13,145,327</td>
<td>13,820,565</td>
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</table>

Budget Paper No. 15, p. 34

Gender implications

Women make up the majority of the workforce in the schooling sector. At the primary level of schooling, women accounted for 81.5% of teaching staff in government schools, 82.6% in Catholic schools, and 77.1% in Independent schools. The proportion of teaching staff who were female was less at the secondary level, where the figures were 60.1% for government schools, 58.9% for Catholic schools, and 55.8% for Independent schools (ABS, 2015).

Any changes to structures or funding has serious implications for women’s working conditions and ability to deliver high quality education to their students.

Women are also the major care givers for children and changes to funding models impacts on their relationship with schools and their ability to enter the workforce. On average women spend 8 hours 33 minutes caring for children under 14 years of age compared to men who care for 3 hours 55 minutes (ABS, 2012).

Hence inadequate and short-term funding has some serious consequences for Australian women and their children in relation to accessing education and other work and family commitments in the longer term.

Recommendation

Recommendation 23

- NFAW recommends that Funding for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education becomes an integral part of school funding.
3.3 Vocational education and training

**Winners**

- There are no winners in the VET budget except for older workers who may benefit from the minimal amount of funding, $3.8 million, for a program entitled *Rollout Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers*.
- The Government has indicated its commitment to working in partnership with state and territory governments to create an efficient and effective skills training system including a commitment to the already existing Skilling Australians Fund which has been allocated $250 million, presumably because the revenue measure failed to deliver adequate funds.
- The Commonwealth will provide $1.8 billion to support a National Skills and Workforce Development specific purpose payment and $293.4 million through a national partnership payment.

**Losers**

- VET students who are not in an apprenticeship or traineeship. Of the more than 1.3 million government-funded students in Australia’s VET system, over one million are not apprentices and trainees (NCVER Final figures, 2016). The Skilling Australians Fund is targeted at support for apprentices and trainees only. However, even they are missing out as no state or territory has yet signed up to an agreement under this program.
- Businesses sponsoring migrants under new temporary skill shortage visa and certain permanent skilled visa holders to pay levy. Revenue to go to Skilling Australians Fund. This fund topped up by a Government allocation of $250 million.
- Women and girls who cannot secure an apprenticeship in skilled occupations in high demand because they remain largely male preserves. Apprenticeship commencements have been dropping since 2012 for females more than males; there are only 59,000 female commencements reported for 2016 of a total of 167,000 commencements.
- Disadvantaged learners in all equity groups entering or re-entering the workforce for whom old initiatives are now only missed opportunities.
- Women in male dominated trade occupations where there are continuing shortages. Apprenticeship for Girls programs which could mentor and support these women are also missed opportunities.
- VET-FEE-HELP students, a majority of whom were women, who were cheated of adequate quality training and have not had their loans forgiven or waived. An additional $1m was allocated to support the VET Student Loans Ombudsman due to the increased workload in managing and investigating student complaints. No funding was allocated to alternative programs to support those who were unable to complete qualifications due to collapse of private RTOs.
- The National Training System in general where efficiencies have been identified and cuts made of $8.3m over four years.
The Budget

New Measures

There is only one measure for the Education and Training Portfolio (Program expenses 2.8: Building Skills and Capability). This Rollout is targeted to those Australians aged 45 to 70 and will offer individually tailored assessments and referrals with advice on how best to use their existing skills in the workforce or where to identify opportunities for upskilling. This is accompanied by a $2000 per worker incentive payment to fund reskilling opportunities.

In addition, Industry Specialist Mentoring for Australian Apprentices has been allocated an additional $20 million, but will finish on 30 June 2019. An additional $1.2m has been allocated to Trades Recognition to upgrade their IT system, and $3.6m to support the VET student loans IT system. Efficiencies are expected to be made in this latter area by 2020-2021.

The Skilling Australians Fund had an initial allocation of $15.3m in 2017-2018. The Government is providing an annual amount of guaranteed funding in this budget with further amounts to be determined by the revenue paid into the fund. An additional $250 million will be provided by the Government to ensure that Australians have the skills that Australian business needs.

While the Government has allocated money in the budget the states and territories have to reach agreement with the Commonwealth as to how they will use it, and in a year no such agreement has been reached, which ostensibly means that there have been further cuts to the VET budget.

Other elements of Building Skills and Capability set out in the portfolio budget statement continue with funding at the same level except that some initiatives are being phased out or funding is to be tapered down and ceases in the forward years to 2021-2022. The Australian Apprenticeship Support Network and Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program continue with funding at the same or slightly lower levels. The Adult Migrant English Program funding is cut slightly for the following year and then increases in the forward years to 2021/22

Measures being Phased Out

2.8.1 Industry Skills Fund closed to new applications on 31 December 2016; the closure of the National Workforce Development Fund was announced in a previous budget.

**Funding Cuts**

There are cuts in other programs. For example, Skills for Education and Employment tapers from $103m to $93m in 2018-2019 and then continues at this level or slightly below into the forward years.

In the sub-program Industry Workforce Training, there is a $10m reduction in the allocation from $49.8m in 2017-2018 to $39m in 2018-2019 with a small further reduction in the forward years.

The Australian Skills Quality Authority responsible for ensuring the performance and quality of VET providers has been allocated $54.2m in line with its estimated actual expenditure for 2017-2018. Its priorities for the year will be addressing the outcomes of the review of the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011*; progressing the tightening on new entrants to the VET market; developing its Regulatory Strategy; and undertaking a review into international education. It is expected, like TEQSA, to move to full cost recovery from 2020-2021.

**Other Portfolios – Jobs and Innovation**

There are programs in this portfolio allocated funding, including the $1.8m to encourage more women and girls to pursue STEM careers, and $10.4m for Transition to Work program for young people. However it is unclear what training that might arise from these programs.

**Gender implications**

The failure of the Australian Government to identify and allocate funding to programs to specifically support women and girls in a range of VET programs continues in this budget. Funding is allocated under STEM, but the importance of women and girls undertaking VET science, engineering and technology qualifications again appears to be ignored.

The Government continues to allocate funding aimed at increasing the take-up of apprenticeships and traineeships, without again specifically supporting funded programs aimed at women and girls.

Additional funding has been allocated to the VET Student Loans Ombudsman for investigation of complaints without additional funding to support those affected, which includes many women and girls, in undertaking alternative VET programs which may enable them to gain initial or further employment.

**Recommendations**

NFAW calls upon WAVE, the TAFE Community Alliance, and other concerned women’s groups to join NFAW in recommending that:
Recommendation 24

- The Government should clarify the reasons why there has been no funding allocated through the Skilling Australians Fund, and that the budget allocations be used to support vocational education and training opportunities this year. This should include increased programs for women and girls, including in skills shortage areas.

Recommendation 25

- The Government should allocate sufficient funding to the states and territories to address the serious decline in student enrolments in VET. According to the Mitchell Institute (2018), if the ongoing decline in student enrolments is not reversed, VET will become a residual sector by 2031.

Recommendation 26

- The Government recognise and act on the significant role of TAFE in delivering a range of programs for women and girls.

Recommendation 27

- The Government and the Assistant Minister should address continuing concerns about the discriminatory outcomes resulting from its approach to funding skills training focused on apprenticeships and skills shortages, without any positive funding intervention to redress the sex segregation entrenched in many industries.

3.4 Higher education

Winners

- Young people from regional, rural and remote communities undertaking further education and/or training.
- Universities engaged in intensive research projects.
- Regional university medical schools and their students.

Losers

- HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP approved higher education course providers.
- Students with a HECS debt earning $45,000 per annum.

The Budget

The 2018-2019 Budget has made comparatively few decisions that affect higher education. This is not surprising considering the scope of the changes outlined in last year’s Higher Education Reform Package, nevertheless there are some that will have a long-lasting impact.
The Government has maintained its focus on reducing spending on higher education, arguing that making the universities more cost-effective will improve their sustainability in the long term. The Budget does not provide new or additional funding for higher education following the freeze announced in the Australian Government’s mid-year budget update in December 2017. Funding increases will recommence 2020, based on projected population growth and enrolment numbers. Consequently, Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) will become more difficult to attain.

**Rural and regional education**

Rural and regional areas are the exception to this overall pattern. The Government will provide $96.1 million over four years from 2018-19 to implement recommendations from the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education*. The funding will support young people from regional, rural and remote communities to transition to further education and training, or employment. It will provide 500 additional CSPs annually from 2019 for students commencing a sub-bachelor degree or enabling course at university at a cost of $28.2 million over four years and an additional $14.0 million over four years for 185 additional CSPs annually for students commencing a bachelor degree course at university through a Regional Study Hub (Budget Paper No 2, Part 2: Expense Measures, p. 48).

The Government has committed $16.7 million over four years from 2018-2019 for the creation and maintenance of up to eight Regional Study Hubs across regional Australia that will enable students to study all or part of their courses online (Department of Education 2018, HERI Budget Overview, pp. 18-19).

Additional CSPs will also be created at three universities serving regional areas - the Government will provide $123.6 million over five years from 2017-18 to the University of the Sunshine Coast, the University of Tasmania and Southern Cross University (Budget Paper No 2, Part 2 - Expense Measures, p. 43).

A further $53.9 million over four years from 2018-2019 is allocated to improve regional students’ access to Youth Allowance by changing the threshold and assessment year for parental income. The new Parental Income Test threshold under the regional workforce independence criterion will be increased to $160,000 (with a further $10,000 increase in the threshold for each additional child) and the financial year preceding the beginning of the recipient’s 14 month ‘self-support period’ will be used as the assessment year (Budget Paper No 2, Part 2: Expense Measures, pp. 48-49).
**Tuition fees**

The Government will implement changes to the combined lifetime limit for tuition fee assistance announced as part of higher education reforms in the 2017-18 MYEFO, resulting in increased costs of $4.5 million over four years from 2018-19:

- after 30 June 2019, students who have reached their combined lifetime limit of $100,000 under the *Higher Education Loan Program* (HELP) and the *VET Student Loans program* will be able to pay off some of their debt, then borrow up to the limit again.
- commencement date for the combined lifetime limit for tuition fee assistance will be delayed from 1 January 2019 to 1 January 2020.

This measure includes $1.0 million in capital funding to make changes to the IT systems of the Department of Education and Training and the Australian Taxation Office (Budget Paper No 2, Part 2: Expense Measures, p. 40).

**Cost recovery**

In addition to the funding freeze, the Government will implement a number of arrangements from 1 January 2019 to recover costs:

- partial cost recovery arrangements for the *Higher Education Loan Program* (HELP). The arrangements will include an application fee and an annual charge that will apply to all HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP approved higher education course providers. It is anticipated that this measure will raise $30.7 million over four years from 2018-19 (Budget Paper No 2, Part 1: Revenue Measures, p. 10); and
- a new levy on higher education providers that will be phased in over three years, to recover the costs of Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) risk monitoring and oversight activities that benefit the higher education sector as a whole. TEQSA will transition to full cost recovery from 2021-22, generating additional revenue of $28.3 million, resulting in a net saving to the Budget of $4.0 million over four years from 2018-19.

The Government will provide TEQSA with an additional $24.3 million over four years from 2018-19 to strengthen the agency’s regulatory oversight of the higher education sector, meet the significant increase in applications for registration from prospective providers, and protect Australia’s reputation for high quality higher education. In particular, this measure will also provide TEQSA with additional resources to detect contract cheating (Budget Paper No 2, Part 2: Expense Measures, p. 49).

**Cross portfolio**

Decisions affecting higher education extend into other portfolios, notably Industry, Innovation and Science, Health and Agriculture and Water Resources.
Research Infrastructure Investment Plan

The Government will provide an additional $1.9 billion over 12 years from 2017-2018 ($393.3 million over five years) to implement the Research Infrastructure Investment Plan contained in the 2017-2018 Budget. Implementation will involve partially funding specific national research infrastructure projects, with the Government’s contribution subject to co-investment being secured by project proponents. Projects will be delivered through an expansion of the existing National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy which includes both universities and other specialist organisations (Budget Paper No 2, Part 2: Expense Measures, p. 46).

Rural Medical Schools Network

Although no increase in the overall number of medical school places is required at present, the Government is committed to the creation of a series of rural medical school programs in the Murray Darling region to be known as the Murray Darling Rural Medical Schools Network. A pool of medical CSPs, drawn from existing allocations, will be established to provide the Government with the flexibility to address health workforce priorities as they arise. The pool will withhold two per cent of existing commencing medical CSPs (up to 60 CSP places) every three years for redistribution between providers through a competitive process, starting from 2021. The Rural Medical School courses will be delivered by universities in the Murray Darling region and funded through the Department of Health (HERI Budget Overview 18-19).

Gender implications

The most significant winners in the 2018-2019 Budget are prospective students in regional areas, a substantial number of whom are women.

No data is available on the number of women (or men) who would like to enroll in a university degree; however, the data on Austudy recipients indicates that a smaller proportion of students from regional and rural areas than metropolitan centres attend university (DSS Demographics December 2017). This situation has long been recognised in various studies - Universities Australia (2015) noted that

‘in relation to transition to university and the proportion of persons aged 25-34 years with a bachelor degree or above, there is also a decreasing trend with increasing remoteness. In 2014, the proportion of residents holding a degree was: Major City 42.2 per cent, Inner Regional 21.8 per cent, Outer Regional 19.5 per cent, and Remote and Very Remote 17.8 per cent.’ (p. 8)

The 2017 Independent Review into Regional Rural and Remote Education Inquiry noted that university enrolment by young people from rural and regional areas is more a matter of deciding not to apply for a university place than of not receiving an offer. Many rural students, particularly Indigenous students,
find the prospect of leaving home, friends and family too daunting to contemplate. The additional costs of accommodation and travel present a further obstacle. Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert and Muspratt (2004) reached similar conclusions, but also noted that young women faced additional challenges in the form of parental opposition to their leaving home.

Changes to the student living allowance, the creation of Regional Study Hubs and the increase in the number of places available at the University of the Sunshine Coast, the University of Tasmania and Southern Cross University have the potential to enable more women to enrol.

At the same time, the ongoing freeze in higher education funding will result in a tightening in the availability of CSPs in other parts of the country and in metropolitan areas. Fewer places, combined with other changes resulting from the 2017 Higher Education Reform Package, and the subsequent mid-year budget update will likely have a deterrent effect on young women considering applying for a place. Mature-age women students with dependent children, both undergraduate and postgraduate, will be particularly vulnerable.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 28**

- NFAW recommends that the Government recognise the difficulties facing low SES and minority students from all locations, and extend the benefit currently reserved for rural and regional students to students living in the metropolitan interface and disadvantaged areas.

**Recommendation 29**

- NFAW recommends that the Government recognise the importance of quality teaching in supporting all students to make the transition from school or further education to higher education and re-establish funding for research into university teaching and professional development for university teaching staff.

**Recommendation 30**

- NFAW recommends that the Government end the freeze on recurrent funding in order to reduce dependency on casual teaching staff.

**References**


Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012), Gender Indicators, Cat.No. 4125.0
http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by+Subject/4125.0~Jan+2012~Main+Features~Caring+for+children~4120


Department of Social Security Demographic Data Set December 2017. https://data.gov.au/dataset/cff2ae8a-55e4-47db-a66d-e177fe0ac6a0/resource/fd1e5a28-5e12-4c70-9d1d-d564c1c3e892/download/dss


OECD (ND), Family Database, LMF 1.2 Maternal Employment charts http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm

4. EMPLOYMENT

4.1 Employment programs

Winners

• JobActive and ParentsNext service providers. Unfortunately the Australian Government has not separated the cost of funding these external providers out from the overall budget. However, there is an expansion of service providers for ParentsNext and an increase in the power to sanction clients (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018–19 Budget Jobs and Small Business Overview).

Losers

• New mothers and single parents ‘encouraged’ by frozen benefits and tightened compliance arrangements onto employment programs whose design undermines their capacity to manage their family responsibilities.
• Those on the Newstart Allowance and other payments that will be rolled into a newly-created JobSeeker Payment as of March 2020 (Department of Human Services, 2017a). This new payment has significantly higher compliance requirements. The government estimates a savings of 13.5% between 2018–19 and 2021–22 “as a result of the reduction in the number of unemployment benefit recipients”.

The Budget

ParentsNext

Unfortunately 2017-18 Budget documentation does not separate out many of the welfare costs so that they can be examined individually. Perhaps this is due to the highly contentious nature of many of them. It can therefore be difficult to state what resources are allocated for some line items.

However, following a trial in 10 disadvantaged sites, ParentsNext is being scaled up nationally ‘at a cost of $150.1 million over the forward estimates period.’ In addition, an intensive ParentNext service is also to be offered to all qualifying job seekers in 30 locations where a high number of Parenting Payment recipients are Indigenous. Funding of $113.0 million has been allocated over the forward estimates for this measure (Thomas, 2017). If these are two discrete funding commitments, the total cost of expanding ParentsNext is $263.1 million.

ParentsNext is described by the Government as an ‘engagement and referral program’ for parents in receipt of Government income support payments.

It provides early intervention assistance to parents with children as young as six months with the aim of helping parents identify and achieve their education and employment goals. According to the Government’s Discussion Paper, approximately 96% of participants are expected to be women,
including around 10,000 Indigenous women (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2017).

**Gender implications**

While programs assisting women into meaningful, productive employment with a career pathway theoretically welcome, there are severe flaws with the ParentsNext model.

A primary flaw is that the model is designed to place women in precarious, low-paid positions (see section 4.4 - Women’s Workforce Participation). Women fill nearly 70% of precarious positions (Workplace Gender Equality Agency), and this has attendant negative impacts on their health, wellbeing and financial security (Maury, 2017).

Additionally, the program fails to account for the not inconsiderable amount of unpaid ‘work’ that is involved in caring for a child. Caring duties for most women jump from 2 hours to 51 hours per week when a baby is born, and women spend 30 hours per week on housework when their youngest child starts school (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016). It is unhelpful to view mothers of young children as ‘unemployed workers’ when they are in fact working longer hours than men in full-time positions, though largely without remuneration (Workplace Gender Equality Agency).

There are no compelling reasons why the Government should focus its attention on the demographic which has the least amount of time available when there are so many other demographics struggling to find employment. This is particularly the case as ParentsNext has the potential to create a downward spiral for the women who are forced to engage with it, as they must pay another person, most likely another woman and most likely at very low wages, to look after children while they engage in precarious employment themselves.

**JobActive**

As noted above, the Government has not separated out many line-items costs in the budget for welfare expenses. This includes what must be the considerable cost of paying independent contractors to manage the welfare to work program, also known as JobActive (McLaren, 2016).

JobActive providers are contracted by the Government to both provide job seeking services and to monitor and punish breeches of mutual obligation requirements for receiving welfare payments. The 2017 Budget further tightened these requirements,
• introducing a revised compliance approach to provide a “simpler, more targeted framework to hold jobseekers to account if they do not meet requirements”. The Targeted Compliance Framework will apply financial penalties to jobseekers who are deliberate and persistent in not complying with requirements, and
• strengthening third party relationship status verification for single parent payments (Department of Human Services, 2017b).

The welfare to work model is particularly damaging to single mothers, many of whom are solely reliant on government payments due to difficulties they can experience in accessing child support payments that are technically due to them (Landvogt, Edwards and Cook, 2017).

The continuing punitive crackdown on welfare compliance -- on top of “robodebt” measures, drug testing, and blanket income management -- further exacerbates the effectiveness of the social safety net for these women. JobActive providers have a large amount of discretion to apply punishment to women who are considered not to have met their mutual obligation requirements. This can tip into the absurd at times (McLaren, 2016). It can also push these women towards jobs in the care sector which are seldom realistic for a single mother to consider, as they are predominantly precarious, low-paid positions.

Finally, JobActive does not take into account the trauma that women who have separated from their partners - many due to experiences of abuse - are dealing with, and in many cases continue to deal with, due to high incidences of post-separation abuse. While the Government has pledged to address domestic violence at a national level (see section 7 - Violence against Women), its mutual obligation requirements often serve to undermine the very women who have left violent relationships and are struggling to keep their family together, address psychological and other forms of damage, and navigate a pathway to financial security.

Data from the 2017 Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey indicates that single mothers are going already going back to work or are otherwise reducing their need for public financial assistance of their own volition (McLaren, 2017).
While about 58% of women rely on some form of welfare for up to four years continuously, welfare reliance drops to 13.4% beyond that for those on continuous income support during what is predominantly the child-rearing years.

For single mothers, these few years require extra financial support due to the nature of raising children with the independent responsibility for both finances and parenting. Ten to 12-year-olds receive approximately 36 hours per week of care from their parents (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005) - the equivalent of a full-time job. In the case of single-parent households, there becomes a clear decision that must be made: to spend that time either at work, or parenting.

The highly conditional and punitive nature of many JobActive parameters, coupled with the design issues identified above, suggest that the Government is not interested in increasing the financial security or career prospects of mothers with young children (Maury and McLaren, 2017), but rather in pushing this highly vulnerable group out of the welfare system in order to ‘encourage self-reliance’ (Department of Social Services, 2018, PBS, p. 7, Figure 1).

**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 31**

- NFAW recommends that JobActive parameters applying to new and single mothers be re-examined and redesigned to deliver a better ‘mutual obligation’ fit between their family responsibilities, their welfare reliance, and their long term economic security (see also recommendations at section 4.4 - Women’s Workforce Participation).
4.2 Workforce programs

Winners

While there are no gains here, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and Fair Work Ombudsman retain current staffing levels.

Losers

Victims of workplace exploitation, including wage theft. Budget funding increases target union corruption rather than employer corruption.

The Budget

Funding for the Workplace Gender Equality Agency remains virtually unchanged, and staffing levels are not affected (Prime Minister and Cabinet PBS, WGEA, Table 2.1.1, 346)

Funding for the Working Women’s Centres in SA and the NT remains tied to competitive tender by the Fair Work Ombudsman. The Queensland Working Women’s Centre lost funding through the same process. Some of its functions have ceased and others are being handled elsewhere—including by interstate providers that do not specialise in women’s services.

Staffing levels for the education services and compliance activities of the Fair Work Ombudsman remain unchanged (Jobs and Small Business PBS, Fair Work Ombudsman and the Registered Organisations Commission, Table 2.1.1). Funding for the Registered Organisation Commission is to increase by $8.1m (Budget Paper 2, Part 2); its staffing is to be increased by nearly 50% to 28 (Jobs and Small Business Portfolio Budget Statement, Fair Work Ombudsman and the Registered Organisations Commission, Table 2.2.1).

Gender implications

Workforce support for vulnerable women

There are two overlapping issues here:

- the need to address exploitation of vulnerable employees by unscrupulous employers, often in industries and sectors where women predominate, and
- the progressive loss of advisory and support services tailored to help vulnerable women with work-related matters.

There is increasing evidence of a widespread black economy for substandard jobs. Most unscrupulous employers rely on employees’ ignorance of entitlements, or their fear of losing employment. A subset of these employers may require workers to enter into sham contracting arrangements, or intentionally transfer assets from an indebted company to a new company to avoid paying employee entitlements.
(‘phoenixing’), or use arm’s length employment (contractors or franchisor/franchisee arrangements) to facilitate underpaying wages, or paying below award rates, often for dangerously long hours.

Women from CALD backgrounds are overrepresented in industries or subsectors identified by the Fair Work Ombudsman as having high levels of non-compliance with basic workplace standards, namely hospitality, retail, cleaning, security and trolley collecting (Fair Work Ombudsman, Corporate Plan 2016-17).

Women are also structurally more likely to be vulnerable at work because they carry the main burden of family responsibilities. Current data shows that new mothers go from spending a weekly average of 2 hours caring for others to spending 51 hours. At the same time, they increase the time they spend on housework from a weekly average of 16 hours to 25 hours. The extra time spent looking after children and doing housework comes as women reduce their time in paid work, which declines from a weekly average of 33 hours pre-motherhood to 9 hours after the birth (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016).

Family responsibilities mean that women are likely to be restricted in the hours and location of their employment, and to pay for their flexibility with loss of job security and low wages. This disadvantage is greatly exacerbated for single parents and victims of domestic violence, whose choices are narrower and whose responsibilities are broader.

Working Women’s Centres have in the past specialised in issues affecting women with neither the means nor the capacity to access assistance elsewhere, particularly women who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or those from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, or women who have disabilities or live in regional and remote areas, or women who have family responsibilities or are victims of family violence. The Centres offered those women advice and assistance in an environment that was safe and accessible.

The Government has responded to the increasing evidence of exploitation and its intersection with women’s workforce vulnerability by cutting advice and assistance to women workers.

- While once there were five Working Women’s Centres (in NSW, SA, Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory), now there are only two. Where once there was direct funding for WWCs, the remaining Centres are obliged to compete for fixed term grants.
- The Fair Work Ombudsman, which does not have the expertise to provide such tailored services, and as a government agency is not welcoming to many vulnerable workers, has in any case reduced funding for program expenses in the next two financial years (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018 Portfolio Budget Statement, Fair Work Ombudsman and Registered Organisations Commission, Table 2.1.1)
• Only the Registered Organisations Commission has received additional funding in the 2018 Budget, to deal with issues of ‘union governance and corruption’.

NFAW is concerned to witness the priorities manifest in these funding decisions. Granted, the Registered Organisations Commission’s staffing increase comes off a narrower base; but its responsibilities are also narrower.

**The Workplace Gender Equality Agency**

NFAW regards the work of WGEA as critically important in addressing women’s structural disadvantage in the workforce. We welcome its continued funding. It is an essential resource for employers—and as the Government has acknowledged, it also has an essential role to play in implementing its Strategy for Women’s Economic Security (Implementation Plan, 14, 22).

NFAW has also argued that it has a role to play in developing partnerships between educational institutions and industry bodies to establish and foster career pathways for women across a range of non-traditional sectors, including STEM industries (see section 4.3 — STEM Initiatives).

However, the Agency is not a resource for employees in difficulty. Its work is ‘the provision of advice and assistance to employers and the assessment and measurement of workplace gender data.’

The Human Rights Commission does handle complaints from employees, but in 2017 the threshold of what constitutes a valid complaint of unlawful discrimination was raised. This, and the confidential nature of its conciliated outcomes, makes its role in direct provision of advice and assistance to women difficult to assess.

The provision of working advice and assistance to employees was the remit of the Working Women’s Centres.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 32**

• NFAW recommends that the Government provide additional funding to the Fair Work Ombudsmen to allow it to address high levels of non-compliance with basic workplace standards, noting with the FWO that ‘these behaviours create barriers to workforce participation, weaken the integrity of the workplace relations system, distort the labour market and undermine the principles of fair competition’ (FWO, Corporate Plan 2017-18).
Recommendation 33

- NFAW strongly urges the Government to restore the funding of the five Working Women’s Centres in its forthcoming September Statement on Women’s Economic Security.

4.3 Women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

Winners

- There is a small amount of ongoing funding from 2018-19 to encourage more women into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers.

The Budget

Australian Technology and Science Growth Plan — encouraging more women to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers

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The Australian Government has said it will provide $4.5 million over four years from 2018-19 to encourage more women into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers. According to the budget papers, the funding is earmarked to progress:

- the Women in Science Strategy;
- a decadal plan for women in science, to provide a roadmap for sustained increases in women’s STEM participation;
- the work of the new Women in STEM Ambassador who will focus on promoting STEM in schools and to school-aged girls; and
- the development and distribution of a STEM Choices resources kit to address the under-representation of girls in STEM education.

The budget papers note that this measure builds on the 2015-16 MYEFO measure titled National Innovation and Science Agenda – inspiring all Australians in STEM.

Gender implications

Australia loses female talent at every stage of the STEM pipeline. This limits the career prospects and earning capacity of individual women, as well as negatively impacting on the productive capacity of male-dominated sectors. Drawing on work by the Office of the Chief Scientist (2016):
• Only 16% of university and vocational educational STEM graduates are women, and traditionally male sectors employ far fewer female STEM graduate (for example, 12% in construction, and 15% in transport).
• Women make up fewer than one third of total STEM academic and research staff. Only 17% of STEM professors are women, even though women comprise 40% of junior academics.
• Fewer female STEM graduates earn in the top income bracket ($104,000 or more per annum): 36% men compared to 12% women; and average earnings in female-dominated industries are less than in male-dominated ones.

Other research has found that women are leaving STEM fields in greater numbers than men because of inflexible work arrangements and care responsibilities (Mavriplis et al., 2010).

In response to this year’s budget, the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) noted that “measures to encourage women in STEM careers are not new…” (WEL, 2018).

While any measures aimed at addressing women’s recruitment to, and attrition from, STEM sectors are welcome, NFAW agrees with WEL that this budget’s announcements are not new, and are mostly a refresh of existing programs to encourage girls into STEM subjects at school. NFAW notes also that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has called upon member states - of which Australia is one - to take action to draw more girls and women into STEM for a more peaceful and sustainable future.

**Recommendations**

Noting that number of factors influence the low participation of girls and women in STEM including wider sociocultural and labour market preconceptions, and drawing on NFAW’s submission to the senate inquiry into gender segregation in the workforce (2017):

**Recommendation 34**

• NFAW recommends that co-ordination between portfolios - such as education, employment and innovation - be formalised and strengthened to ensure gender responsive policies and joint programs.

**Recommendation 35**

• All Australian education and training ministers introduce career guidance that promotes online role models and provides gender aware career information for family members.

**Recommendation 36**

• A National Career Guidance Strategy be developed that addresses participation of women in STEM, non-traditional careers and industries and develops models of best practice career guidance.
Recommendation 37

- An integrated strategy be developed for secondary school girls aimed at increasing representation and retention of women in non-traditional roles.

Recommendation 38

- The Workplace Gender Equality Agency be tasked with, and funded to, further develop partnerships between stakeholders including educational institutions and industry bodies, to establish and foster career pathways across a range of non-traditional sectors.

Additionally, NFAW notes the recommendations made by the senate committee arising from the inquiry into gender segregation in the workforce (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017), and supports that:

Recommendation 39

- The Department of Education and Training undertake a national evaluation of all programs and initiatives associated with increasing numbers of girls in STEM education, to provide benchmark data and best practice guidelines.

4.4 Women’s workforce participation

Winners & Losers

- There will be jobs growth in the female dominated care sector for carers, particularly in the disability sector, but in the absence of any policy response, those jobs will be largely casualised, poorly paid and low skilled, with little training and no career path. Flexible, on-demand child care will be difficult for intermittent workers to find and costly. Transport costs to reach clients will also be an issue.

The G20 Commitment and Government’s 2018 Budget statement ‘Women’s Economic Capability and Leadership’

In 2014, the Australian Government made a commitment to reduce the gap between women’s and men’s workforce participation by 25% by 2025.

For Australia, this meant decreasing the gap by three percentage points from 12.1 per cent (the 2012 starting point) to 9.1 per cent by 2025. January 2018 data shows that the workforce participation rate for 15-64 year-olds for women is 73.2% and for men is 82.9% (ABS 2018). This makes the difference between women’s and men’s workforce participation now 9.7 percentage points, leaving 0.6 of a percentage point to be added by 2025.
It is very likely that the G20 goal will be met. Demographic changes, the demand for care workers, and the sex segregation of the workforce between them will see to that.

Women predominate in the top six of the ten occupations projected to add the largest number of jobs over the five years to May 2022. Government employment projections to November 2020 show that the health care and social assistance industry (78.3% women) is projected to make the largest contribution to employment growth, increasing by 16.4%. The education and training industry (71.4% women) is expected to increase by 13%. The disability sector workforce is estimated to more than double to meet the demand of the full National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by 2020.

This data is cited in ‘Towards 2025: An Australian Government strategy to boost women’s workforce participation’ (the strategy, 19), which collected elements of the last Budget considered relevant to women’s workforce participation.

These measures tackled demand by increasing employer incentives to take on temporary trainees and interns at reduced or no wages.

Supply measures were summarised in the strategy as ‘reforms to welfare payments that better assist recipients to participate in the labour force, prevent lengthy absences from the labour market and reinforce self-reliance through work’ (Strategy, 25). These 2017-18 budget measures tightened and reduced tax transfers and unemployment entitlements, ‘encouraging’ women into the labour market while enabling wage growth to be suppressed.

The Budget

The Government's 2018 Budget statement 'Women's Economic Capability and Leadership' continues the trajectory of the 2017 Budget. Apart from the recycled or refurbished measures which make up most of its announcements, its key employment measures are:

- the provision of $64.3 million to establish a Jobs and Market Fund to assist employers in the NDIS sector to ‘take advantage of NDIS opportunities’ (Budget Paper No. 2, Part 2), and
- the extension of the ParentsNext program at a cost of $84.7 (Department of Jobs and Small Business Portfolio Budget Statement, Table 2.1.1).

Gender implications

The contribution of caring work in the NDIS sector to women’s economic capability is problematic. The work tends to be undervalued, low paid, casualised and/or part-time with little training and not much at all by way of a career path.
• Most employment gains appear to be coming from casual employment growth. Since 2015, casual work has been increasing, and now accounts for 42 per cent of all workers (National Disability Services, 2).

• Not surprisingly, there is a very high turnover rate of casual workers - a two-year average of nearly 9% per quarter (equal to 35% per annum). (National Disability Services, 2).

The pressures on service providers to be competitive, flexible and responsive in the new market readily translate into pressures for more flexible working arrangements for the frontline disability support services workforce. This flexibility is likely to mean more fragmented working time and reductions in the working conditions. Employers are now asking the Fair Work Commission for reduced minimum engagement periods that could see disability workers being engaged to work a single hour at a time (Mcdonald, 2016).

New employees in the caring sector generally find wages low, and wage growth at an all-time low.

The drafters of the 2018 Budget may see this as the high road to economic security for women, but that is because they are not standing on it.

One group that will be standing on it is defined by the ParentsNext program - also highlighted in the 2018 Budget Statement ‘Women’s Economic Capability and Leadership’. According to the Statement, ‘96 per cent of participants [are] expected to be new mothers, including around 10,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’ (2018-19 Budget Statement, 3). This is the same demographic that the Budget expects to enter the NDIS workforce (Strategy, 19 and 2018-19 Budget Statement, 2).

This program is considered at greater length in section 4.1—Employment Programs. However, it is worth noting here that young women spend on average 30 hours per week on housework when their youngest child starts school. Caring duties jump from 2 hours per week to 51 hours when a baby is born (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016). These are the people being targeted to feed the NDIS workforce in their spare time.

Setting aside the NDIS Fund and ParentsNext, whose contribution to women’s economic capability is problematic at best, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the remaining initiatives represent a collection of old news (refurbished STEM initiatives and Leadership programs) and new programs that have an impact on women because they have an impact on people generally. That is, the underpinning gender-specific analysis and policy development have not received any attention until the time came to cobble a women’s statement together.
NFAW sought advice from the Office for Women on what had happened with the commitment in the 2017 Strategy to ‘undertake a gender analysis of employment services to both improve current service delivery, as well as inform the design of employment services by 2020 where there is significant potential to improve service delivery to women’ (Strategy Implementation Plan, 26). We were advised that

[the] Department of Jobs and Small Business have responsibility for this item and confirmed the analysis is in its final stages. Once completed the analysis will be fed into the policy design process for the existing and future Employment Services.

We note that the Department of Employment is also in the process of undertaking an evaluation of the first phase of ParentsNext which it advises is incomplete despite the decision to roll the program out nationally in July 2018 at a cost of $150.1 million over the forward estimates period.4

NFAW looks forward to seeing the ‘significant potential’ to improve service delivery become significant practice in relation to redesigning ParentsNext and other employment programs.

**Time Use Survey**

Time use data is as critical as program data to the design of policies affecting the shape and extent of women’s employment participation. Time use surveys provide information for decision-making that is unavailable using other measures. They are an essential tool for the measurement of respective male-female task allocations and time commitment changes in households.

The last Australian Time Use Survey was conducted in 2006, and the data is highly likely to be an inadequate reflection of current society.

In its Budget Statement, the Labor party has committed itself to provide $15.2 million in funding to the Australian Bureau of Statistics to conduct the Time Use Survey in 2020 and 2027, arguing that ‘this will allow us to place a monetary value on women’s unpaid caring work, acknowledge its economic importance, and better shape public policy’ (ALP, 28).

NFAW urges the Government to make a similar commitment to fund a recurrent Time Use Survey in its Spring Statement.

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4 The Department advises that the research into the pilots conducted by the Social Research Centre was part of the data collection for the evaluation, is not itself an evaluation, and is not publically available.
Undervaluation of caring work

In addition we look forward to measures that address the undervaluation of caring work that continues to underwrite Budget savings at the expense of those who work in the feminised caring sector. Social infrastructure should be treated as an investment equally with physical infrastructure.

The equal pay case in the child care sector is dragging into its sixth year. Meanwhile, the Government has actually reversed measures to address the undervaluation of women’s caring work put in place by the previous Labor Government, including:

- a $1.5 billion Workforce Compact and Supplement to support aged care workers in, and
- a $300 million fund to give pay rises to undervalued child care workers.

We note that the wages growth forecasts in the 2018-19 Budget are generally believed to be too optimistic. If the Government were to implement pay equity strategies in the care sector, the likelihood of those forecasts actually being met would increase because of the significant employment growth in that sector.

Recommendations

For the Spring Statement:

Recommendation 40

NFAW recommends that government examine the issues of job design and skills development in the disability sector, with a view to reducing turnover in the sector and improving outcomes for employees and their clients.

Recommendation 41

NFAW looks forward to seeing the full implementation of the Government’s commitment to make a ‘significant improvement’ to employment services by undertaking and implementing a gender analysis. We recommend that ParentsNext be among the programs redesigned as a result of such analysis.

Recommendation 42

NFAW urges the Government to commit itself to fund a recurrent Time Use Survey.
**Recommendation 43**

- NFAW recommends that the Government adopt measures to address the undervaluation of work in the caring sector on which it partly relies to make savings to fund its other priorities. In particular, we recommend that it reinstate the $300m Budget measure to support child care and the $1.5b measure to fund pay rises for aged care workers, and examine similar measures to support job design and earnings in the disability care sector.

**References**


5. HEALTH

5.1 Health (including sport)

**Winners**

- Pregnant women and mothers through a $20.9 million investment in preventative health care and chronic disease management.
- Sufferers of idiopathic overactive bladder through the listing of a new treatment on the MBS.
- Women impacted by the urogynecological mesh implants through the provision of interim services for surgical removal.
- $977.7 million in additional funding for public hospitals through the National Health Care Agreements.
- $4.0 million provided to support Australia’s 2023 Women’s World Cup Bid.
- $17.5 million over four years for research into Women’s Health and Maternal Health and the first 2,000 days to address the underlying social determinants of health that impact of a child’s early days of life.
- Inclusion of Boostrix® and Adacel® for pregnant women during each pregnancy for the prevention of pertussis.
- $2.2 million in funding to secure the operation of the Australian Breast Device Registry.

**Losers**

- Women visiting the GP may be impacted by the effective cut in the Medicare rebate of $2.50 in real terms due to the Medicare freeze if they are not bulk billed.

The Budget

**Preventative Health**

The Budget includes a number of preventative health measures specifically targeted at women and children that while modest have the potential to improve outcomes. In addition to the Healthy Active Beginnings measures, the Budget announced $17.5 million in research funding from the Medical Research Future Fund for Women’s Health and Maternal Health that offers the prospect of addressing the social determinants of health that impact on a child’s lifetime health outcomes (Budget Paper 2, page 116).

**Healthy Active Beginnings**

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Source: Budget Paper 2, page 111
The initiatives include:

- $3.0 million over three years from 2018-19 to improve the long term health of women and their children through the development of better information on healthy eating and physical activity during pregnancy
- $1.0 million over three years from 2018-19 to increase awareness of Endometriosis among women and General Practitioners; and
- $0.6 million over three years from 2018-19 to increase awareness of the risks of type 2 diabetes among women who experience gestational diabetes.

**Medicare**

While the Government has released the Medicare freeze moving forward, it has failed to reverse the impact of the Medicare freeze on medicare rebates. It has however made a number of changes to the MBS schedule.

**Guaranteeing Medicare — Medicare Benefits Schedule — new and amended listings and response to taskforce recommendations**

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Source: Budget Paper 2, page 109-110

In response to the MBS Review Taskforce, the Government restricted the use of urogynaecological mesh and added new interim services for the surgical excision of urogynaecological mesh (Budget Paper 2, page 110).

It has also approved new services to treat patients with idiopathic overactive bladder by percutaneous tibial nerve stimulation neuromodulation therapy.
**Sport**

The Government is providing $4.0 million over two years from 2017-2018 to Football Federation Australia (FFA) to assist in preparing a bid for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. This is in addition to the $1 million provided in the 2017-2018 MYEFO. This compares to the $46 million the Australian Government commitment to the unsuccessful Australian bid for the men’s 2022 Football world cup.

**FIFA 2023 Women’s World Cup Bid — additional support to Football Federation Australia**

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Source: Budget Paper 2, page 108

**Medicines**

The Budget includes reforms to the PBS and pricing of medicines to deliver savings. These are welcomed and will strengthen the sustainability of the PBS.

Specific to women, the *National Immunisation Program* has been expanded to fund new vaccines from 1 July 2018 including *Boostrix®* and *Adacel®* for pregnant women during each pregnancy for the prevention of pertussis.

**National Immunisation Program — new and amended listings**

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Source: Budget Paper 2, page 120

**Hospitals**

The Budget includes funding to implement the new National Health Agreement, with $977.2 million over four years. While the additional funding will assist states and territories meet growing demand for hospital services driven by population growth, an ageing population and new technologies, it remains a significant reduction in Commonwealth funding following the $50 billion in cuts to public hospitals included in the 2014-2015 Budget.

**Supporting Our Hospitals — National Health Agreement — public hospital funding**

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Source: 2018-19 Budget Paper 2, page 126
Gender implications

Compared to previous budgets there was a distinctive focus on the impact of health measures on women which is welcomed. However, the last National Women’s Health Policy was released in 2010 and Australia needs an update to ensure our health policies meet the specific needs of women.

Women may continue to be negatively impacted by the impact of the Medicare freeze which has lowered to Medicare rebate by $2.50 in real terms if they are not bulk billed. Women make up the majority of GP visits with approximately 60% of GP visits made by women and a further 11% by children (Britt H et al, 2014) and are disproportionately affected by the lower rebate and higher out of pocket costs.

The investments in preventative health will assist women in maintaining health during pregnancy; however more is needed to address key social determinants of health - a mother’s health during pregnancy. Mothers in the lowest socioeconomic areas were 60% more likely to have a low birth weight baby than mothers in the highest socio-economic areas in 2013 (AIHW, 2017). The $20.6 million committed in the Healthy Active Beginnings will only start to address some of the inequities in health outcomes amongst Australian women that require a more strategic and targeted approach than that outlined in the Budget. The World Health Organization recommends that governments assess all policies and programmes on health and health equity, and build coherence in government action to address the social determinants of health (WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008).

Approximately 120,000 women are estimated to have undergone mesh sling procedure in Australia (USGA, 2017). The restrictions on the use of urogynaecological mesh and adding new interim services for the surgical excision of urogynaecological mesh (Budget Paper 2, page 110) attempt to address a devastating health and safety failure.

Over 370,000 women are estimated to participate in soccer in Australia (Morgan, 2014) including 15.8% of women aged 15 to 17 (Australian Sports Commission, 2017). The opportunity for Australia to hold the women’s world cup in 2023 will help increase participation and would represent a watershed moment for women’s sport in Australia. While welcoming the $5 million committed so far by the Australian Government win the bid to host the world cup, it is noted that this falls short of the $48 million committed to the unsuccessful bid to host the 2022 Men’s World Cup.

Recommendations

Recommendation 44
• NFAW recommends that the Government should reverse fully the Medicare freeze and increase the Medicare Rebate by $2.50 for a standard consultation.

Recommendation 45

• NFAW recommends that the Government should develop a new National Women’s Health Policy 2020 to address the specific health issues facing women.

Recommendation 46

• NFAW recommends that, in accordance with WHO recommendations, the Government should review all health policies and programs for their impact on health inequality.

Recommendation 47

• NFAW recommends that the Government should ensure that all necessary support is provided to secure the 2023 women's world cup for Australia.

5.2 Mental health

Winners

• beyondblue which has pushed for Australian Government recognition of its Way Back Support Service and those suicide survivors and their families who will benefit from this service.
• Older Australian women in residential aged care facilities and in the community who are able to access the new mental health services.
• Researchers whose work is funded under the Million Minds mental health research program, funded at $125 million / 10 years from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).
• Lifeline, which received additional funding ($33.8 million / 4 years).
• Women living in remote areas who will receive services from Royal Flying Doctor Service mental health outreach program.

Losers

• Women with perinatal depression.
• Those who need access to services and support for eating disorders.
• Women with mental health problems living in rural and remote Australia where there are severe shortages of psychologists and psychiatrists.
• Those hoping for a more integrated and strategic approach to mental health funding and service delivery.

The Budget

The 2018-19 Budget provides $192.7 million over 4 years for mental health services and there is also funding announced in April to support a new mental health outreach program for the Royal Flying Doctor Service ($20.4 million). In addition, $125 million over 10 years is provided from the Medical Research Future Fund for the Million Minds mental health research mission.
While these investments are welcome, they do not shift the trajectory of spending on mental health, leaving a considerable gap between the resources available (mental health is about 7.6% of the total government health spend) and mental health’s share of the overall burden of disease (12%). It has been described as a “minimal and piecemeal approach to mental health funding and planning” (Rosenberg, 2018). The various budget provisions are described below.

**Funding to organisations that provide mental health services**

Lifeline is provided with funding of $33.8 million over 4 years for its telephone crisis services. Of this funding, $6.1 million is additional funding in 2018-19 to 2020-21, in addition to the $19 million per year that Lifeline currently receives from the Australian Government. The $15.5 million in 2021-2022 is described as ongoing funding, which will mean a drop in current funding levels if this is not further supplemented.

Funding of $1.2 million in 2018-2019 is provided to SANE Australia to deliver a targeted suicide awareness campaign *Better Off With You*.

Funding of $0.6 million over 2 years is provided to the Junction Clubhouse in Cairns, which supports individuals with long-term mental health issues to re-engage with other people and re-connect with their community. The funding is contingent on co-contributions from the Queensland Government.

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Budget Paper No 2 2018-19, p 122-123

**After-care following a suicide attempt**

$37.6 million over 4 years is provided to improve follow-up care for people discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt. These people are at highest risk for a repeat suicide attempt. This funding includes:

- $10.5 million for *beyondblue* to provide national support and oversee the implementation of the Way Back Support Service (WBSS) which *beyondblue* has developed, trialled and evaluated (*beyondblue* 2018a);
- $27.1 million for Primary Health Networks to commission services to be accessed by WBSS clients. However, this latter funding is contingent on co-contributions from states and territories.

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Information and advice on mental health services

The Budget provides $4.7 million over 2 years for Head to Health (https://headtohealth.gov.au/) which provides users with access to evidence-based information and advice on mental health services through telephone service and a web portal. This service was a commitment made in 2015 as part of the Australian Government’s response to the Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities review of mental health programs by the National Mental Health Commission. The portal first went live in October 2017.

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Continued support for the National Mental Health Commission

The Budget provides $12.4 million over 4 years for the work of the National Mental Health Commission (NMHC), to review and report on the performance of Australia’s mental health system and the provision of national leadership in advising on mental health reforms. This is to include expanding the NMHC role under the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.

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This is apparently top-up funding: the total annual budgets for the NMHC in the Health Portfolio Budget Statements reveal that in recent years it has been funded at around $7 million per year. $2 million in additional funding provided in August 2017 (at the time that a new board and expanded powers were announced) brought funding in 2017-2018 to $8.6 million. It is assumed that the $14.5 million in estimated funding includes the $3 million from the budget announcement.

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Mental health services for older Australians

A total of $102.5 million over 4 years is provided to deliver mental health services to older Australians. Of this, $82.5 million is for mental health services for people in residential aged care facilities (RACFs) and $20 million is for a pilot of services led by mental health nurses to target the mental health of older Australians in the community, particularly those at risk from isolation. The allocation of funding over the forward estimates is not provided.
There is little detail about how these services will work. The departmental fact sheet states that the funding for services in RACFs is for people with a “diagnosed mental disorder” and it is not clear if that diagnosis must be made prior to admittance (DoH 2018a).

Presumably these services will need to be provided within the facilities. Will they be billed to Medicare? And will psychologists and psychiatrists be available to deliver these services?

The community-based pilot recognises the mental and physical health risks that are posed by social isolation and loneliness. The trial will target Australians over 75 years of age who are deemed at risk. It is not clear if eligibility requirements will include that they must be receiving a Home Care Package. The pilot will be led by mental health nurses and developed by the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses.

These are worthwhile programs, but given the need, funding - and therefore the number of people who will benefit - is very limited.

**Mental health services provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service**

In March the Prime Minister announced additional funding of $84 million to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) for mental health and dental services. This followed pleas from the RFDS that mental health services in rural and remote Australia were in “crisis” even as their funding was running out. At the time, it was stated that $20 million would go to dental care and the remainder to mental health (Borys 2018).

While the budget papers are silent on the actual funding split, the Department of Health's 2018-19 *Budget at a Glance* states that $20.4 million (presumably over 4 years) is provided to mental health care through the RFDS (DoH 2018b).

There is no obvious explanation for the funding discrepancy: it is possible that the “missing” $43.6 million goes to support current RFDS mental health services and the $20.4 million is for what is described by the RFDS as a “new national mental health program” to be up and running by 2019 (Borys 2018). This will involve outreach, inclusion of mental health professionals in the primary care clinics, and telehealth services.

**Mental Health Research**

In March the Minister for Health announced the *Million Minds* Health Mission, focusing on mental health, to be funded from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) ($125 million over 10 years). The plan for
this research effort and priorities for funding are to be developed “over the next six months” (Research Australia 2018).

This future funding is in addition to the mental health funding provided through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Last year this was announced by Minister Hunt as $120 million. At the same time, he also announced the establishment of a new Mental Health Research Advisory Committee to ensure that NHMRC funds are targeted to priority mental health projects with high potential for improving Australians’ lives (Hunt 2017).

It is not clear how or if there will be coordination between these two research funding bodies.

**Multicultural Mental Health**

Just days before the Budget was released the Minister for Health announced funding of $3.9 million over 3 years for what is described as “tailored mental health support for Australians from multicultural backgrounds” (Hunt 2018). This provision is not included in the Budget and is arguably yet another example of ad hoc decision-making in health policy. There is reference in the announcement to the Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australians, but not details about how this provision will be implemented. $1.3 million per year will not go far to cover the needs.

The previous Mental Health in Multicultural Australia initiative, which developed the Framework, ceased to operate in December 2016 (MHiMA 2016).

**What is not in the Budget**

There are some glaring omissions in the Budget in areas of real need for mental health services. These include:

- Addressing the lack of mental health workforce and services in rural Australia. In particular, access to psychiatrists outside of metropolitan areas is extremely limited (Corsetti 2018). The situation with regard to services to meet mental health needs has been described as a “crisis” (Borys 2018).
- The National Partnership Agreement for Perinatal Depression lost funding in 2015 and has not been replaced (Lewis 2015). Yet one in ten women experience depression in the lead up to birth and one in seven mothers and one in ten fathers experience post-natal depression (PANDA 2018).
- About 1 million Australians suffer from an eating disorder, but only a quarter of them are in treatment. Women comprise 64% of these groups (ED Vic 2018).

**Gender implications**

Women experience some mental health conditions at higher rates than men: around one in five Australian women will experience depression and one in three women will experience anxiety during their lifetime. Women also experience post-traumatic stress disorder and eating disorders at higher
rates than men. Up to 1 in 10 women experience depression while they are pregnant and 1 in 7 women experience depression during the first year after birth (beondblue 2018b).

Major life transitions such as pregnancy, motherhood and menopause can create physical and emotional stresses for women. Negative life experiences - infertility and perinatal loss, poverty, discrimination, violence, unemployment and isolation - also impact on women's mental health and wellbeing. Unequal economic and social conditions also contribute to women's higher risk of depression. Carers, who are predominantly women, are at increased risk of stress and depression (beondblue 2018b).

While women have lower suicide rates than men, their rates increase with age (the highest age-specific suicide rate in 2016 was observed in the 50-54 age group with 82 deaths = 10.4 per 100,000) (Mindframe 2017).

Because women live longer but have higher healthcare needs, they outnumber men in aged care by two to one (AIHW 2018).

The lack of services, the serious maldistribution of the mental health workforce (especially psychiatrists and psychologists), and growing out-of-pocket costs mean that many women are unable to access needed services in a timely fashion. Too often this results in a crisis situation with presentation to the Emergency Department and admittance to acute care.

Together these facts all highlight why timely access to affordable mental health services and support is important for women's health and wellbeing and their roles in family and the community as nurturers, carers and productive workers. Specific mental health services targeted to older Australians will also disproportionately benefit women.
Recommendations

Recommendation 48

• NFAW recommends that mental health funding reflects the burden of illness and is effectively targeted to those population groups most in need. It should be better integrated within primary care.

Recommendation 49

• NFAW recommends that the specific needs of women across the lifespan should be considered.

Recommendation 50

• While the efforts to address gaps in services (the provision of after-care services for those who have attempted suicide and of mental health services for those in aged care) are commended, NFAW notes that every effort must be made to ensure that these are appropriately expanded and made sustainable over time.

Recommendation 51

• A more strategic approach needs to be adopted to mental health policy and program development, funding, implementation evaluation and feedback. Within a culture of innovation, a more long-term vision and a more sustainable approach is required to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians.

References


Urogynaecological Society of Australasia (2017), Submission to Senate Inquiry on Number of women in Australia who have had transvaginal mesh implants and related matters. Canberra

6. OLDER WOMEN

6.1 Pensions

**Winners**
- Full age pensioners with home equity to draw on.

**Losers**
- Women who are renting in retirement.

**The Budget**

The 2018-2019 Budget creates a *More Choices for a Longer Life - finances for a longer life* package, encouraging older Australians to work, to draw down on home equity and to take up lifetime retirement and income products. The three elements of this measure will cost $258.6 million in total, in the five years from 2017-2018. It reflects an approach to old age incomes which emphasizes working past pension age and self-reliance through the use of home equity and annuities.

**More Choices for a Longer Life — finances for a longer life**

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Source: Budget paper No.2, p.175
Under this measure, Budget 2018-2019 provides:

- $227.4 million to increase the Pension Work Bonus from $250 to $300 per fortnight, meaning that pensioners will be able to earn up to $7,800 each year without impacting their pension. It will also be expanded to allow self-employed retirees to earn up to $300 per fortnight without impacting their pension;
- $20.2 million to amend the pension means test rules to encourage the development and take-up of annuities; and
- $11.0 million to expand the Pension Loans Scheme to everyone over Age Pension age and to increase the maximum fortnightly income stream to 150% of the Age Pension rate. Previously, the Pension Loans Scheme was only open to age pensioners who received a part pension; it will now be open to people drawing full age pensions.

**Gender implications**

The age pension measures in Budget 2018-2019 will be useful to women who have the capacity and opportunity to work past pension age, and who have access to home equity to draw on.

The *More Choices for a Longer Life - finances for a longer life* package does not benefit women who are unable to work past the age of 65 and who do not have home equity from which to draw - that is, older women who are renting. This group of women is increasing as a proportion of older Australians, and is at the greatest risk of poverty.

Given the small take-up of the Pension Loans Scheme presently, it will be interesting to see whether the relaxation of qualifying requirements encourages its uptake. We also know that the other measure in this package, encouraging the take up of annuities, mainly benefits women with high superannuation balances.

Budget 2018-19 retains measures which will disadvantage low income older women: removing the Energy Supplement; increasing the age pension age to 70 by 2035, and ceasing the Pension Supplement. Housing is also a very serious issue (see section 2.3 - housing and homelessness).

**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 52**

- NFAW recommends that the Government review the rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance.
6.2 Aged care

**Winners**
- 105,000 people currently waiting for a high-level home care places benefit from the 14,000 additional high-level home care places over four years.
- Aged care residents currently not eligible for psychological services through Medicare will benefit from $82.5 million to improve mental health services in aged care facilities.

**Losers**
- No substantial additional investment in the aged care sector to address growing demand - largely a shifting of resources from residential aged care to home care.
- Large areas of unmet need reflected in the 100,000 wait-list for home care packages impact disproportionately on women that are more likely to require assistance and also more likely to be informal carers.

**The Budget**

*More Choices for a Longer Life — healthy ageing and high-quality care*

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</table>

Source: Budget Paper 2, page 117-118
In response to the Legislated Review of Aged Care (Department of Health, 2017) and the waiting list crisis for home care packages, the Government announced a number of changes in the 2017-2018 Budget. The majority of the reforms are funded from re-prioritisations and reallocation of funds from residential aged care to home care services.

The Government will deliver an additional 14,000 high-level home care packages over the forward estimates, which is in addition to the 6,000 high level packages announced in the 2017-2018 MYEFO.

$105.7 million will be provided over four years to support the provision of additional residential aged care places and home care packages in remote Indigenous communities.

A new independent Age Care Quality and Safety Commission will be established on 1 January 2019. The Commission will combine the functions of the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency, the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner, and, from 1 January 2020, the aged care regulatory functions of the Department of Health.

Mental health services for those living in residential aged care will be improved through an additional $82.5 million over four years from 2018-19.

**Gender implications**

Aged care is a critical issue for women as users, as workers providing services and as informal carers. Women constitute two thirds of both residential aged care and home care users (Department of Health, 2018a). In addition, women make up 57% of all primary carers aged over 65 (ABS, 2016).

There are a number of urgent issues and significant risks facing the aged care system. The aged care reform package, Living Longer Living Better, introduced in 2012 has four principles: ageing in place, consumer choice, market based competition and consumer contributions. This year’s package represents a start to addressing these issues but doesn’t demonstrate sufficient planning for growth and delivering sufficient services in the longer term. This includes acting on the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry into the Aged Care Sector Workforce.

There are currently over 105,000 people waiting for home care packages in Australia, with average wait times of between 6 to 9 months (Department of Health, 2018b). The 14,000 additional home care packages over four years announced in the Budget is unlikely to significantly address the growing unmet need for packages. The additional $1.6 billion in funding for these packages over four years has been reallocated from residential aged care, rather than representing additional investment in the aged care sector.
Responding to the ongoing growth in demand for home care packages through the piecemeal reallocation of funding from residential aged care is not sustainable, and does not provide women requiring care or providing informal care support with the certainty of support they require.

Quality remains a major area for concern in the provision of aged care services, and the Government’s commitment to establish an independent Age Care Quality and Safety Commission will drive oversight that is more robust and better information for consumers on the quality of providers.

143,000 women aged over 65 are living with a psychological disability (ABS, 2016) representing 63.6 per cent of those aged over 65 with a psychological disability (ABS, 2016).

The additional funding of $85 million for mental health services is welcome, but in essence removes an inequity in the current system whereby aged care residents were not able to access psychology services under Medicare. There remains significant and growing unmet need for mental health services for the older Australians, which the Budget is not addressing.

In particular, the rising prevalence of dementia poses a significant challenge to the aged care sector. Fifty-two per cent of aged care residents currently suffer dementia (AIHW, 2012), and this rate is likely to climb. The AIHW projects that by 2020, 400,000 Australians will suffer from dementia, including 242,800 women (AIHW, 2012).

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 53**

- NFAW recommends that the Government undertake a review of age care demand and funding to provide greater certainty to the sector and users about the future of aged care service provision. This should include meeting the mental health care needs of residents increasingly suffering dementia and supporting Australians to stay in their homes through properly funded home care packages.

**Recommendation 54**

- NFAW recommends that the Government develop an aged care sustainable funding model.

**Recommendation 55**

- NFAW recommends that the Government introduce an aged care workforce plan, including addressing growing casualisation and pay equity.
References


Department of Health 2018b. *Home Care Packages Program Data Report 2nd Quarter 2017-18*. March 2018
7. ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

7.1 Policy and programs

**Winners**

There are some measures which provide small levels of additional support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault:

- 1800RESPECT is to receive $11.5 million over two years from 2018-2019 (Budget Paper No.3, p.173).
- DV-Alert - Domestic Violence Response Training is to receive $6.7 million in 2018-2019 “for community and frontline workers to support women and children affected by domestic and family violence” (Budget Paper No.3, p.171).
- Under the National Partnership on Family Advocacy and Support Services - a one off $7 million in 2018-2019 is to assist in “the establishment and operation of Family Advocacy and Support Services by legal aid commissions [to]...provide integrated duty lawyer and family violence support services at locations across Australia” (Budget Paper No.3, p.37).
- Addressing elder abuse, including by funding trials of specialist elder abuse support services, is to receive $22 million: “The Government has further committed to working with the states and territories to develop a national online register for enduring powers of attorney, in addition to developing a National Plan on Elder Abuse” (Budget Paper No.2, 1-26).
- The establishment of an Anti-Slavery Unit ($3.6M) and the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation ($68.6M) may in part assist in reducing violence against women and girls however this is not clear from the budget documentation (Budget Paper No.2, p127).

**Losers**

- More than 50 Australian women and girls who die from sexual assault and domestic violence each year, and their families and friends.
- Over 500,000 Australian women and girls injured through domestic violence and/or sexual assault each year who are unable to access the support they need.
- Community groups and frontline services trying to support women and girls facing sexual assault and domestic violence.
- All legal assistance services - where no additional core funding was provided and where the national partnership agreement expires in 2020.
- Indigenous communities experiencing toxic levels of domestic and family violence and sexual assault due to failure to provide funding for Closing the Gap Refresh processes or justice-related measures despite the Australian Law Reform Commission’s Indigenous Incarceration Report (NACLC, 2018).
The Budget

In his 2018-2019 Budget speech, the Treasurer claimed that the Liberal and National parties can always be trusted to keep Australians safe. He cited stopping the boats; anti-terrorism efforts, defence, and protecting Australia from those who seek to do us harm and exert unwelcome influence on our soil and detailed the extra funding the Coalition had provided in these areas.\(^5\)

Unfortunately, neither the Treasurer's speech nor the substantial "safety related funding" in the 2018-19 Budget address the biggest safety risks faced by Australian women - domestic violence and sexual abuse.

It is estimated that, without appropriate action, three quarters of a million Australian women will experience and report intimate partner violence in 2021-22 costing the Australian economy an estimated $15.6 billion (KPMG, 2009).

The 2018-19 Budget contains little new or additional expenditure to prevent or respond to family violence.

**1800RESPECT**

An additional $11.5 million over two years has been allocated toward the delivery of 1800RESPECT, comprising $7.363 million in 2018-19 and $4.129 in 2019-20.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhanced Support for 1800RESPECT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Departmental expenses</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>– 7,363</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget Related Paper No 1.15, Table 1.2, p. 25

1800RESPECT is the national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. In 2017, 1800RESPECT was the subject of some national attention after the Department of Social Services went out to tender at the conclusion of the then-existing contract to provide telephone trauma counselling services, which had, since the inception of the service, been held by a New South Wales-based not-for-profit women’s organisation. A change to a panel model comprising the existing service and three other not-for-profit providers distributed nationally, led to a Senate Inquiry, Delivery of National

\(^5\) For example, in relation to “Stopping the boats and keeping them stopped”, the Australian Financial Review reported on 4 January 2018, after analysing Treasury figures provided to a Senate estimates committee, that maintaining Australia’s hardline immigration and border policies cost taxpayers more than $4 billion per annum (or around $12 billion over the 2018-19 Budget’s three forward years). Further, in relation to “Giving our defence forces what they need to do their job to protect our values and our freedom” the 2018-19 Defence Portfolio Budget Statements show increases in Defence “Funding from Government”, over the 2018-19 funding level, over the 3 forward years totalling in excess of $15 billion. Total annual Defence funding reaches in excess of $40 billion per annum by the end of the forward estimates period.
**Outcome 4 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.** In light of the change of contract and the recent public attention on 1800RESPECT it is welcome but potentially unsurprising that the Government would invest further in this service. However it is not clear as yet exactly how the $11.5 million will be spent - whether that be directly into trauma counselling, or into implementing the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry, or otherwise elsewhere into the service.

Many advocates within the family violence space have noted with great disappointment that, between this allocation to 1800RESPECT and a small allocation for community legal services, the total amount provided in the Budget for direct family violence service delivery is just $18.2 million. Additionally, all this funding is for existing programs rather than new, potentially innovative initiatives. Many stakeholders have chosen to compare the Australian Government’s expenditure unfavourably with much larger investments in the states and territories, in particular the record $1.9 billion provided over three years in the 2017-18 Victorian State Budget, with an additional $42.5 million in 2018-19.

With the Fourth (and final) Action Plan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* scheduled for release in 2019, there is still a long way to go to achieve the ambitious objectives set down in that document, if the Government is not prepared to invest significantly more additional funding.

**Elder Abuse**

$22 million has been allocated over five years to tackle elder abuse.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>More Choices for a Longer Life—protecting older Australians</th>
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<tbody>
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Source: Budget Related Paper No 1.2, Table 1.2, p. 13

The elder abuse expenditure appears in the Budget Paper as ‘More Choices for a Longer Life - protecting older Australians’ and falls under the Attorney General’s portfolio. It is a partial response to the ALRC report, *Elder Abuse - A National Legal Response*.

The $22 million will support the development of an Elder Abuse Knowledge Hub, a National Prevalence Research scoping study, the development of a National Plan to address elder abuse, and the expansion and evaluation of trial programs including the placement of specialist elder abuse units within legal services.

Evidence about the prevalence of elder abuse is lacking, justifying the need for a prevalence research scoping study. However it is estimated that between 2% and 10% of older Australians experience elder abuse, with older women significantly more likely to be victim-survivors than older men.
Office of the eSafety Commissioner

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner will receive $14.2 million over four years, in a measure that was announced by the Minister for Women as helping to make cyberspace safe for women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>2017–18 $'000</th>
<th>2018–19 $'000</th>
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<tr>
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<td>3,377</td>
<td>3,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,505</td>
<td>3,607</td>
<td>3,377</td>
<td>3,197</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total expense measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,505</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>3,505</td>
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<td>3,377</td>
<td>3,197</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Communications and Media Authority property—divestment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental capital</td>
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<td>nfp</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>nfp</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the eSafety Commissioner—additional funding</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental capital</td>
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<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total capital measures</td>
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<td>Departmental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>nfp</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget Related Paper No 1.2, Table 1.2, p. 91

The additional funding accompanies an expansion of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, which has replaced the Children's eSafety Commissioner, originally launched in 2015. $11.7 million of the funding will go towards the Office's expanded functions - targeting image-based abuse - whilst $2.5 million will go to the eSafety Women and Certified Providers programs.

The budget commitment follows the recent passing of the Enhancing Online Safety (Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Images) Bill in the Senate; it is awaiting confirmation by the House of Representatives. The Bill will grant the Office of the eSafety Commissioner the ability to issue fines of up to $105,000 to people who refuse to remove from the Internet, intimate images posted without the consent of the person pictured - commonly referred to as “revenge porn”.

Despite supporting the Bill in the Senate, the Federal Opposition says that the measures do not go far enough, as the new federal powers would fall under civil law, rather than criminal law. Federal Labor MPs have been advocating for the criminalisation of image-based abuse since 2015, in line with academic research published by Melbourne-based researchers, Dr Nicola Henry and Dr Anastasia Powell.
**DV-Alert**

The Budget also includes close to $6.7 million to continue funding of DV-Alert, a national organisation training community frontline workers in domestic violence response. DV-Alert falls under the National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domestic Violence Response Training</th>
<th>2,1,2,4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administered expenses</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental expenses</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>– 6,662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget Related Paper No 1.15, Table 1.2, p. 25

**The Family Law System**

One area of policy which is of great interest to family violence practitioners and victim-survivors is the family law system. Sadly there is no new or additional funding within the Budget to address the many issues with the family law system, with the Government apparently awaiting the findings of the Australian Law Reform Commission’s sweeping review, due to be handed down in early 2019.

The 2017-18 Federal Budget featured an announcement of $96.1 million for family law initiatives, including $12.7 million to establish parenting management hearings. The then-Attorney General also announced proposed changes to the Family Law Act to prevent victim-survivors of family violence from having to cross-examine, and be cross-examined by, the perpetrator of violence.

The parenting management hearings proposal has been subject to some criticism by family violence and legal practitioners, and the *Family Law Amendment (Parenting Management Hearings) Bill* was referred by the Senate to the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in December 2017, alongside the *Family Law Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill*. Both Bills are yet to pass the Senate; this means that the money allocated in last year’s budget is yet to be spent. The President of the Law Society of New South Wales has called for the parenting management hearings proposal to be considered further by the ALRC as part of its review, and for the $12.7 million previously announced to be redistributed into the Courts to address the extensive backlog of matters currently awaiting hearing.

The Exposure Draft of the Family Law Amendment (Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties) Bill 2017 was subject to a period of public consultation which closed in August 2017. The proposal to end self-represented cross-examination in family law matters involving family violence was enthusiastically greeted by the family violence sector and victim-survivors alike, however the Bill has not moved past the Exposure Draft phase and seems to have stalled further with the appointment of a new Attorney General in December 2017.
Prior to the announcement by the then-Attorney General that the ALRC would conduct a full review of the family law system in September 2017, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs already had its own review underway, the *Parliamentary Inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence*. This review had also been requested by the then-Attorney General, in March 2017. This has, justifiably, resulted in concerns of double-up, and that the *better family law report* will be “lost” in the midst of the ALRC process.

As part of the *better family law system* Inquiry 126 formal submissions were lodged and 5,490 people completed an anonymous online questionnaire sharing their experience of the Family Court. This is an extraordinary response to a Parliamentary Inquiry, which is indicative of the passion that exists within the community around the desperate need to reform the family law system. Contributing to a submission process such as this can often be an empowering experience for victim-survivors, but it can also be traumatic, prompting the revisiting of painful experiences. The Standing Committee’s report contained thirty-three strong recommendations, the implementation of which, contributors to the Inquiry view as absolutely urgent.

It is deeply disappointing therefore that no funding has been provided within the Budget to respond to the recommendations of the *better family law system* Report. Whilst we accept that the ALRC’s review is now underway and will consider the recommendations of all earlier Inquiries, including the *better family law system* Inquiry, in its findings; this report stands on its own merits, and its core recommendations should be advanced now.

**Gender implications**

The Prime Minister assessed domestic violence as a “tragic and deadly epidemic” (Parliament of Australia, 2015), yet this budget ignores the safety needs of Australian women. Without a significant increase in funding, the Government’s leadership of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, shows no signs of delivering a substantial and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children.

As the Commonwealth has adopted the leadership role in the national plan it should be prepared to step up and use the levers it has available, including funding commensurate with that of the larger states, to address this national disgrace.

Eight years after the plan was launched and midway through the Third Action Plan, there is no improvement in any of the high-level indicators of change, nor any other sign of a substantial - let alone sustained - reduction in violence against women.
Over the period of the national plan more than 400 women and children across Australia have been murdered in acts of domestic violence and sexual assault, and the lives of hundreds of thousands of other women and children will have been damaged and destroyed by often horrendous physical injuries, fear and intimidation.

The fourth and final action plan within the national plan is scheduled to be developed over the next 12 months. It is critical the Government seriously considers the best way to develop a new, adequately resourced, strategy that will make a difference.

There is a need for significantly greater funding across the nation including for primary prevention, one-stop-shop support and safety hubs, victim assistance, support and counselling, specialist family violence courts, and an expansion of legal assistance for victims, locationally, culturally, and age specific strategies and support services, emergency and longer term accommodation, services for children, specialist legal services, reforms to family law, better policing, improved court supports, improved perpetrator accountability initiatives, and programs in prisons.

Indicative estimates suggest that a strategically focussed fourth action plan would, if properly resourced, require around an extra $2 billion over 3 years (a fraction of the increased funding provided by the Government to the functions cited by the Treasurer—footnote 1 refers).

This funding level is similar to the $2 billion the Victorian Government required to implement the recommendations of its Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Despite the unmet need, there was no increase in core funding in the 2018-19 Budget with groups including Fair Agenda, Domestic Violence NSW, National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum, No to Violence, NACLC and NFAW jointly calling on the Australian Government to “ensure women affected by domestic and family violence also have genuine choice and opportunity; by adequately funding the services needed to address a leading contributor to their injury, illness and death”.

These groups are calling for the Federal Government to match the Victorian Government’s recent $1.9 billion funding commitment to domestic violence prevention and response” (Fair Agenda, 2018).

The Government’s claim that they can always be trusted to keep Australians safe is hollow if it does not improve the safety and wellbeing of Australian women and children. The Australian public, and key stakeholders, will not accept a failure to act decisively and effectively on this issue.
Recommendations

Recommendation 56

- NFAW recommends Individuals and community organisations concerned about progress in achieving significant and sustained reductions in violence against women through the national plan, seek assurances of commitment from their local MP and/or Senators.

Recommendation 57

- NFAW recommends Community organisations and women’s groups asked to participate in consultations on the Fourth Action Plan seek assurance, prior to participating, that the Fourth Action Plan will be designed and funded to deliver a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women, with each policy/program element being justified on the logic of its contribution.

Recommendation 58

- NFAW recommends Individuals and organisations across Australia support the call from Fair Agenda, Domestic Violence NSW, National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum, No to Violence and NACLC for the Commonwealth Government to provide sufficient resources to drive national action to keep women safe.

Recommendation 59

- NFAW recommends The Australian Government match the Victorian Government’s $1.9 billion funding commitment as the best indicator of the quantum of funding required over the period of the Fourth Action Plan to achieve significant improvements in women’s safety.

Recommendation 60

- NFAW recommends that, if the Government considers that the information and evidence needed to develop a fully costed and effective national strategy to support the Fourth Action Plan is not available, then it should follow the approach taken by the Victorian Government and hold a Commonwealth Royal Commission into reducing domestic violence and sexual assault.

Recommendation 61

- That the Parliament support the treatment of non-consensual sharing of intimate images as a criminal matter.

Recommendation 62

- That the Government progress the Family Law Amendment (Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties) Bill 2017 as a matter of urgent priority.
Recommendation 63

- That consideration be given to funding the implementation of core recommendations from the *Parliamentary Inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence* prior to the completion of the ALRC Family Law Review.

Recommendation 64

- That the *Family Law Amendment (Parenting Management Hearings) Bill* be suspended until such time as the ALRC has had the opportunity to examine the proposal further as part of its Family Law Review, and that funding previously allocated to Parenting Management Hearings in the 2017-18 Budget be redistributed to help address the backlog in the Courts.

7.3 Community Legal Centres

The Budget

Under national partnership agreements the Commonwealth Government makes various payments to the states that support some legal assistance services, including payments in respect of services “to disadvantaged persons through legal aid commissions and community legal centres” (Budget Paper No.3, p.66).

| National Partnership on Legal Assistance Services |
|-----------------|------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
|                | NSW        | VIC    | QLD  | WA  | SA  | TAS | ACT | NT  | Total  |
| 2017-18        | 77.8       | 60.1   | 52.4 | 30.5| 20.0| 7.4 | 5.9 | 7.3 | 261.5  |
| 2018-19        | 78.8       | 61.1   | 53.3 | 31.3| 20.3| 7.5 | 6.0 | 7.5 | 265.9  |
| 2019-20        | 79.8       | 62.1   | 54.2 | 32.0| 20.6| 7.6 | 6.1 | 7.6 | 270.0  |
| 2020-21        | -          | -      | -    | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -      |
| 2021-22        | -          | -      | -    | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -      |

Source: Budget Paper No 3, p. 66.

The 2018-19 Budget provided no additional core funding for legal assistance services. The slight increase from the 2017-18 Budget simply reflects the “Commonwealth’s share of wage increases arising from Fair Work Australia’s 2012 Equal Remuneration Order in the Social and Community Services sector” (Budget Paper No.3, p.66).

The National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services expires in 2020. With the Australian Government commenting “funding beyond this period is not for publication pending negotiations” (Budget Paper No.1, 6-15).

Gender implications

Demand for specialist legal services remains high with the top three areas or client groups reported in the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) Annual Report 2016-17 being domestic/family violence, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people and family law.
Yet demand cannot be met. The NACLC annual survey reports that, in 2016, 169,513 people were turned away from accessing community legal centre services - 74.7% because of insufficient resources (NACLC, 2017, 6).

Despite this, there was no increase in core funding in the 2018-19 Budget with groups including Fair Agenda, Domestic Violence NSW, National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum, No to Violence, NACLC and NFAW jointly calling on the Australian Government to “ensure women affected by domestic and family violence also have genuine choice and opportunity; by adequately funding the services needed to address a leading contributor to their injury, illness and death. They are calling for the Federal Government to match the Victorian Government’s recent $1.9 billion funding commitment to domestic violence prevention and response” (Fair Agenda, 2018).

**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 65**

- NFAW recommends that a sustainable, long term funding model be developed for the post-2020 national partnership agreement to ensure increased access to legal services for those in need.

**References**


Australian Labor Party (10 May 2018) *Women’s Budget Statement 2018*


8. INFRASTRUCTURE

To come.
To come.
10. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Winners

• Internationally, Australia stands among a global cohort of government aid programs leading the way on gender equality. In 2016, we ranked sixth for the highest proportion of the aid program contributing to gender equality.

• In 2016-17 the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) spent $2.07 billion on investments that targeted gender equality as a ‘principal’ or ‘significant’ objective, $50 million more than the previous year.

• After sharp reductions, the 2016-17 Budget saw increased funding for family planning, inching close to the levels of 2014-15. The 2018-2019 Budget also highlights programming on sexual and reproductive health across humanitarian response, health sector and country programs.

Losers

• The Government’s diminishing funding for global peace, justice and equality, stands in stark contrast to its ambition for weapons. By 2021, for every dollar we spend on aid, we will spend $11 on defence. For the price of a single submarine, or the $3.8 billion the Government intends to loan weapons manufacturers, we could fund almost the entire aid program for a year.

• The Australian aid budget is plummeting. The Government has been cut 8 times since 2013. $141 million will be cut next year, following cuts of $303 million last year. Compared to our peers, though our economy ranks 9th in the world, Australia rank 19th in terms of generosity. By 2022, we will dedicate just 0.19 per cent of our Gross National Income to Overseas Development Assistance, in stark contrast to the record number of countries dedicating over 0.5% of GNI to ODA.

The Budget

The Australian Government’s key foreign policy strategies recognise the fundamental importance of enhancing gender equality. The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper (White Paper) highlights gender equality as a core national value and women’s empowerment as a ‘top priority’ in achieving global prosperity, stability and security (DFAT, 2017, p 93). The White Paper and the 2015 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy point to the clear and powerful boost to global economic prosperity, peace, and stability that stem from a world that is more equal and more just.

In the last month, DFAT and the Government have released three documents which spell out Australia’s commitment to gender equality:

• The Federal Budget delivered by the Treasurer looks at funding for all government departments over the next 4 years.

• DFAT’s Australian Aid budget summary outlines how the aid program is allocated for the next financial year.

• Performance of Australian Aid looks at past performance across the aid program for FY2016-17, including against strategic targets.
So what does the first Federal Budget since the White Paper deliver for gender equality in international development, defence and foreign policy? And what does the annual Performance of Australian Aid tell us about Australia’s commitment to gender equality in the aid budget?

**Going backwards on aid**

By signing up to the visionary roadmap of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Australia joined the international community in committing to build a better world and a safer and healthier planet for all.

This collectively agreed set of goals charts a course to a better future. To be successful it needs to be prioritised and resourced. The SDGs set a target to allocate 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA) (Target 17.2 of the SDGs sets out this commitment). A record number of countries, including the UK, have now reached this target. And in our own neighborhood, New Zealand announced a 30% increase in their aid budget - on the same day our federal budget was released, showing Australia’s aid budget going backwards (ACFID, 2018, p 3).

This year’s budget entrenches Australia as one of the world’s lowest contributors to ODA. We now rank 19 out of the 29 nations that give aid (ACFID, 2018, p 3). By 2022, we will dedicate just 0.19% of our national income to ODA. We are slipping ever further away from the once bipartisan commitment to increase our aid to 0.5% of GNI and we are leaving far behind the global aspiration of dedicating 0.7% of our GNI to ODA (Bruere & Hill, 2016). This reveals a wide generosity deficit for a nation as wealthy as ours.

The 2018-19 Federal Budget brings in the eighth cut, in real terms, to the aid budget since 2013-2014 (see Figure 1, below). Over the forward estimates (the next four years) we see a capping of the total aid budget at $4bn per annum, resulting in a total cut of $141.4million in real terms over this time period. Total aid spending will be $4.16 billion in 2018-19 - just 0.22% of GNI and dropping down to 0.19% by 2021-22 (ACFID, 2018, p 9).

For the coming two years, the underlying cut is masked and counteracted by contribution payments that Australia is making to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), 85 per cent of which is eligible for inclusion as ODA’ (ACFID, 2018, p 8).
Gender implications

Shrinking the aid budget and the support to ending poverty will disproportionately affect diverse women and girls in our region and the world, as globally, women and girls are more disadvantaged across many dimensions of poverty.

Less money for education means fewer girls in school. Less money for health programs means fewer women accessing contraception or neonatal care. Less money for gender equality means fewer programs to change the laws, norms and policies that will help to end women’s human rights violations and the harmful gender norms that affect all people. While it is positive to see gender equality prioritised within the aid budget, we cannot get away from the fact that cuts to aid hurt women and girls.

Defence

While the aid program is going backwards, defence funding is to ‘grow to two per cent of GDP by 2020-21. The Government will provide Defence with $36.4 billion in 2017-18 and $160.7 billion over the Forward Estimates’ (Payne, 2018a). By 2021, for every dollar we spend on aid, we will spend $11 on defence. For the price of a single submarine, we could almost fund the entire aid program for a year.

It is also of concern that the government has announced its intention to become a top arms exporter (Purcell, 2018). Seen alongside the White Paper’s aim of achieving global prosperity, stability and security, the $3.8bn funding for a defence export facility sends very mixed messages to partner countries in our region who need more aid, not guns.

In an increasingly competitive Indo-Pacific region, Australia’s search for continued prosperity depends more than ever on the wellbeing of countries across our region. Human development is a strong counter to violent instability. In addition, global research has confirmed that the best predictor of a state’s peacefulness is how its women are treated. The larger the gap between the treatment of men and...
women in a society, the more likely a country is to be involved in intra- and interstate conflict, to be the first to resort to force in such conflicts, and to resort to higher levels of violence.

Furthermore, post-conflict agreements that are negotiated without women break down faster than those that do include women. All-male groups also take riskier, more aggressive, and less empathetic decisions than mixed groups (Hudson, 2012). To quote the former Secretary General of the United Nations ‘... there is no policy more effective in promoting development, health and education than the empowerment of women and girls. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended’ (Anan, 2006).

Australia’s National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (2012 - 2018) (NAP on WPS) sets out Australia’s domestic and international priorities to integrate a gender perspective into its peace and security efforts; protect the human rights of women and girls; and promote their leadership and participation in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution.

The Defence Budget Papers make no reference to gender equality to the NAP on WPS, even though the Defence Corporate Plan 2017-2018 (again) reiterates that the ‘Women, Peace and Security agenda is central to Defence’s operational effectiveness and is an essential component of future planning and conduct of operations’ (Department of Defence, 2017).

The Minister for Defence, the Honourable Senator Marise Payne, has affirmed this: ‘We need to make the women, peace and security agenda an inseparable part of the DNA of all of our peace, security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, and our conduct in combat zones’ (Payne, 2018b). She has spoken to the broad-ranging nature of the agenda, asserting the importance of including ‘women in all aspects of peace and security processes, in conflict prevention and conflict management, in resilient and sustainable peace operations and when supporting economic recovery and community stability’ (Payne, 2018b). The Minister also flagged her commitment that the Defence portion of the NAP on WPS generates practical, realistic and attainable objectives for the Australian Defence Force (Payne, 2018c).

However, missing from Budget 2018-2019, again, is any clear mechanism for funding this work, one of the 16 recommendations in the Independent Interim Review of the NAP on WPS which called for a dedicated budget linked to specific activities to support its implementation (Humanitarian Advisory Group, 2015).
Experience shows that without dedicated resources women, peace and security is ignored. Departmental funds must be found to support the development of the NAP on WPS, and going forward, allocations must prioritise the integration of gender equality across all our security efforts.

**There's a vision for gender equality, but we haven't hit the mark yet**

We know achieving gender equality is essential to promoting peace and prosperity for all. As a nation, Australia’s foreign policy has identified gender equality as a core Australian value: we can no longer tolerate the persistent discrimination and exploitation suffered by women and girls. We commend the Government for their identification of gender equality as a core Australian value and for integrating women’s empowerment and gender equality in the Foreign Policy White Paper, the Gender equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy, and Making Performance Count: Enhancing the Accountability and Effectiveness of Australian Aid.

We are not the only ones to do so. The recent report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Review of the Australian Aid Program, recognised ‘gender equality is genuinely a cross-cutting issue for DFAT’ (OECD, 2018b, p 45). They point to Australia’s ‘twin-track approach that defines gender equality and women’s empowerment as a discrete strategic priority investment area in track one, and integrates gender equality in all aid investments, regardless of sector or focus, in track two’ (OECD, 2018b, p 45).

**Overall performance against the 80% gender target**

The primary driver of action and accountability for gender equality in Australian Aid is the performance target that more than 80% of investments effectively address gender issues (DFAT, 2014, p 8).

Baseline data from 2013-2014 shows there was a six percentage point gap that needed to be addressed in order to reach the 80% target. To ensure robust accountability, the Aid Quality Check (AQC) framework for gender equality has been strengthened and gender specialists have played an important role in the moderation of the AQC's. The vital role of the gender specialists was asserted in the Performance of Australian Aid Report which noted that they ‘helped to ensure the robustness of the improved gender ratings and generate more realistic baseline performance data for many programs’ (DFAT, 2018d, p 12).

For a range of reasons, of the ten targets set, gender equality target is the only target not yet achieved (see below). And in 2016-2017 only ‘77% of aid investments effectively addressed gender equality in their implementation’ (DFAT, 2018d, p 12), a drop from 78% in the previous year. We commend the efforts of DFAT to apply rigorous standards to the gender equality target, and hope this will translate into improved performance against the target over coming years.
**Country-level investment performance**

The table below, taken from the Aid Budget Summary, shows where gender equality has been flagged as a budget priority investment for the 2018-2019 Budget.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Gender Equality flagged in Budget Priority investments</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pacific</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
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<td>Vanuatu</td>
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<td>Fiji</td>
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<td>Samoa</td>
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<td>Nauru</td>
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<td>Kiribati</td>
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<td>Tonga</td>
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<td>Tuvalu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook Islands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Niue and Tokelau</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Gender equality flagged in budget priority investments. Source: Australian Aid Budget Summary 2018-2019.

The *Performance of Australian Aid* report flagged that performance in the gender equality target was uneven across the program— in particular, that ‘investments in the Pacific face multiple challenges,’ and that ‘strong leadership’ will be required to improve the gender performance (DFAT, 2018d, p 11).
Figure 4: Percentage of significant and principal gender equality investment by the Australian Government

Budget Summary (5 out of 11 countries identified gender equality initiatives in the list of priorities) affirms the need to focus on gender-response forward planning, particularly in under-performing areas (DFAT, 2018d, p 13).

The Performance of Australian Aid Report aggregated data to a regional level, precluding country-by-country analysis on gender equality performance. While the gender equality performance measure is not being met, bringing a line-of-sight to country-by-country performance within the Performance of Australian Aid report would be useful.

Performance is measured using the Aid Quality Check process, which uses a sliding scale to assess performance against relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability and gender equality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very good; satisfies criteria in all areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Good; satisfies criteria in almost all areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adequate; on balance, satisfies criteria; does not fail in any major area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Less than adequate; on balance does not satisfy criteria and/or fails in at least one major area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Poor; does not satisfy criteria in major areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very poor; does not satisfy criteria in many major areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To facilitate greater insight into the performance in the Pacific region, we have reviewed the Aid Program Performance Reports for 2017, providing a line-of-sight on country-by-country gender equality performance (excluding the regional programs). It is useful to contrast Figure 5, which shows AQC on current investments with Figure 6, which shows the Final AQC on an investment. The Final AQC, which typically are closing older investments that pre-date the establishment of the performance target, are more likely to have unsatisfactory results, while the current investments are performing better.

Figure 5: Gender equality performance against AQC Rating Scale, Pacific Portfolio, 2017. Source Annual Aid Performance Reports.

Figure 2: Gender equality performance against Final AQC Rating Scale, Pacific Portfolio, 2017. Source Annual Aid Performance Reports.

6 The Performance of Australian Aid report reports on performance for 2016-2017. The Aid Program Performance Reports present separate data for 2016 and 2017. It is unclear how they are weighted when combined for the POA report.
**Thematic investment priority performance**

There are also concerning trends in the thematic areas of DFAT’s aid budget, with gender equality performance going backwards in half of the investment priority areas: building resilience, health and education (noting particularly these were the only priority areas to have achieved the 80% investment target in previous years).

The changes in health may be explained by the shift towards systems strengthening approaches, flagged in the Department’s health strategy (DFAT, 2015). In Performance of Australian Aid DFAT notes they consider gender analysis in this kind of work to be more challenging, indicating a need for the Department to develop greater technical capacity on gender analysis in this area (DFAT, 2018d, p 13). The $110m Water for Women program has enabled investment in the agriculture, fisheries, and water to return to the 2014-2015 level (79%) again.

![Figure 7: Gender performance in investment priority areas. Source: Performance of Australian Aid Program, 2016-2017](image-url)

As the data shows, performance against the 80% target has gone backwards in several thematic investment priority areas in the last twelve months. The Performance of Australian Aid Report speaks specifically to the need for strong leadership to address the persistent challenge in meeting the gender equality performance target. While the target is not being met, it would be useful for the Government to ensure that the Performance of Australian Aid Report provides greater accountability for the performance of individual countries against the target, not just regional analysis. We support calls in the Performance of Australian Aid Report to strengthen internal processes to ensure accountability and strong performance on gender equality through:

- greater attention at senior management levels, particularly in terms of oversight and accountability
- mandatory responses to underperforming gender equality investments
- strengthened guidance and gender-responsive forward planning, particularly in under-performing areas, and
• strategies to address challenges in meeting demand, sequencing technical support, and recruitment of gender specialists (DFAT, 2018d, p 10-15).

We also call for improved public accountability and transparency approaches, including that the Minister for Foreign Affairs present an Annual Gender Equality Report to Parliament.

**Moving forward: setting expenditure targets for gender equality**

In the light of ongoing challenges in meeting the 80% target for gender equality investments, in our view the Australian Government should also introduce spending targets for principal and significant gender equality investments. In this way, the aid program will have mechanisms that strengthen the mechanism for integrating gender equality into the inception/design phase of the project, while the performance target will ensure that the implementation phase remains on track to deliver effective gender equality outcomes.

While the Strategic Framework for the aid program identifies gender equality as one of six priority areas for the Australian aid program, along with effective governance; agriculture, fisheries and water; infrastructure trade facilitation and international competitiveness; education and health; and building resilience (DFAT, 2014, p 6), expenditure for gender equality is not tracked at a sectoral level (See for example, the data on Australian ODA to the South and West Asia in DFAT, 2018a, p 56).

The Australian Government played an important leadership role in strengthening the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality policy marker, increasing the rigour of the guidelines by setting stronger minimum criteria for use of the significant and principal categories in the marker. Previous methodological concerns with the gender marker had resulted in Australia being reluctant to set expenditure targets. As a result of the revisions, the Australian Government can have greater confidence to introduce spending targets.

Stronger minimum criteria should be alongside maintenance of the existing performance targets for gender equality. This is particularly important, as the *Performance of Australian Aid* report demonstrated that investments where gender equality was either a principle or significant objective performed better in effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and monitoring and evaluation (DFAT, 2018d, p 14). A spending target would also assist in budget transparency, enabling principal investments to be reported at a sectoral level.

We make this recommendation to address the challenges DFAT has experienced in achieving the gender equality performance target. It is important to note that at a global level, the OECD point to the fact that ‘in 2015, 54% of Australia’s bilateral allocable aid had gender equality as a significant or
principle investment, which is a much higher figure than the DAC country average of 36.3%’ (DFAT, 2018d, p 14). The following table shows Australia’s position with the global cohort. (Interestingly, two of the four table leaders have articulated explicitly feminist foreign policies and/or development assistance policies, Sweden and Canada). Our aspiration for the Australian Government is that they move closer to the top of the leader board, strengthening their capacity to contribute to gender equality work in the Indo Pacific region.

![Figure 8: Top Ten OECD donors (2015-2016 figures): Gender equality as a % of aid screened, 2013-2014 to 2015-2016.](image)

A caveat on this table must be given. The data shows gender equality as a percentage of aid screened (OECD, 2018a). A high percentage in the category of aid “not screened” skews the figures for gender equality as a percentage of aid given, the OECD noting that it ‘generally increases the percentage of gender equality focused aid significantly’ (OECD, 2018a, p 3). An analysis of aid not screened during the same period shows the institutions/countries that have the highest percentage of not screened aid: of the countries leading the way on gender equality investments, Australia is the highest ranked in terms of not screened aid (with $192 million in our aid unscreened for the 2015-2016 period). Focusing strategies to reduce the amount of aid unscreened would support gender equality objectives.

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7 The data is drawn from the OECD Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Donor Charts, and thus presents data averaged across two years.
Setting expenditure targets would also increase visibility on country expenditures. The OECD Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Donor Charts provides country-by-country gender equality expenditure information, but with a lag time of three years.\(^8\) This year’s Aid Budget Summary flags that 30% of the aid budget will be spent in the Pacific region, and yet from this data discussed earlier it can be seen that other regions are performing more strongly in terms gender equality objectives.

Interestingly, The PNG Aid Program Performance Report 2016-2017 notes that the Program has set expenditure targets for principal (5% by 2020) and significant expenditure (90% by 2020). While these

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\(^8\) There are also issues with year-on-year comparability, as the OCED uses new two-year averages in their annual reports, resulting in challenges with comparability.
targets are presently not on track to be met, they demonstrate the practical possibility of establishing expenditure target across the aid program (DFAT, 2018c, p 23).

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Budget Submission called for Australia to set an 8% target for gender equality as a principal purpose in Australian Aid by 2020. The Performance of Australian Aid report shows that Australia achieved this level in 2016. We welcome this achievement, and call on the Australian Government to formally establish targets for principal and significant investments.

![Australian Government Gender Equality Aid: % significant and principal investment](image)

**Figure 11: Percentage of significant and principal gender equality investment by the Australian Government**

Based on the most recently available public data we call for the Australian Government to set the following spending targets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal investment (against DAC criteria)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant investment (against DAC criteria)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recent revisions to the *Definition and minimum recommended criteria for the DAC gender equality policy marker* provide a stronger set of minimum criteria for Governments when assessing projects, and we welcome the decision by DFAT to apply them for its aid expenditure reporting. A stronger target for principal investments would better demonstrate the size of the sector dedicated to achieving gender equality. If aid-for-trade can have a 20% target, then there can and should be a stronger target to drive the promotion of gender equality.
**Gender Equality Fund**

The Government has maintained the $55m allocation for the Gender Equality Fund, which is welcome. As with previous years, it was not possible to obtain a full understanding of the expenditure for the Gender Equality Fund from the projects listed in the budget papers. The role of the Gender Equality Fund is to strengthen work on gender equality and women's empowerment in the aid program and reshape Australia’s development program to drive stronger gender equality performance and results, which requires careful targeting of programs funded through the Fund (DFAT, 2016).

**Funding to UN Women**

Funding to UN Women has remained constant, at $7.8 million (with no increase with CPI).

**Women’s rights organisations need better funding; it’s not clear that this budget delivered**

The Australian Government should increase funding for women’s rights organisations and networks, considering their proven record of achieving change for women’s rights and gender equality (OECD, 2016, p 5-6). Women’s rights organisations in the Pacific face particular challenges accessing funding. Analysis in 2015 of the Feminist Donor database held by the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), which identifies funders for women’s rights organisations, reported that 80% of donors were located in North America and Europe and only 6% gave to countries in the Pacific (AWID, 2015). If the Australian Government wants be a leading donor in the Pacific, and a global champion for gender equality, it should prioritise the funding of women’s rights organisations in the Pacific region.

The OECD DAC reporting system tracks aid in support of women’s equality organisations and institutions through a ‘purpose code’ used in annual reporting on aid activities (code 15170). This code helps to track donors’ support to women’s organisations and ministries. In 2016, 0.56% (USD 454 million) of total allocable aid across DAC members (USD 80,831 million) went to the women’s equality organisations and institutions purpose code.

In Australia, as seen in the table below, support for women’s equality organisations and institutions is similarly low, representing 1.22% (USD 22 million) of total sector-allocable aid in 2016. Additionally, the 2016 figures show a marked reduction in the funding allocated to women’s equality organisations and institutions (reduced by USD 42 million). Australia’s International Development Assistance: Official Sector Statistical Summary 2016-2017 shows a 2016-2017 expenditure of $AUD53 million to women’s

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9 As reported to the Creditor Reporting System (CRS), purpose code 15170. It is important to note that the OECD, in their annual Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Donor Charts use averages across two years to calculate their data. The graph at this section of the Briefing uses data obtained directly from the CRS.
equality organisations and institutions (DFAT, 2018b, table 12 p 16). The low level of funding to women’s rights organisations is counterproductive. The Government continues to reaffirm its commitment to gender equality, while simultaneously constraining its ability to achieve it.

The 2015 inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade into The Human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean - Asia Pacific region recommended the Government ‘focus its investments on programs that directly build local capacity through supporting local women’s organisations’ and lift the percentage of development assistance primarily focused on women and girls to at least 8-10% in the next five years, including through long-term investments (Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. 2015).

While the Government welcomed the recommendation it was unable to commit to the timeframes proposed. It flagged the Gender Equality Fund as part of its response to the recommendation (Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. 2015). As previously discussed, the level of accountability for investments through the Gender Equality Fund in the Aid Budget Papers makes it impossible to track the validity of this response. DFAT reported in response to Additional Senate Estimates 2017-2018 questions that ‘12 percent of projects supported by the Gender Equality Fund in 2015-2016’ had been coded with the DAC purpose code (Senate Estimates 2017-18).

In addition to setting spending targets for principal and significant investment, the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), CARE and ACFID call for spending targets to increase funding for women’s rights organisations. The relevant DAC Code includes both women’s equality institutions (such as national machineries for women) and women’s equality organisations to set a standalone target for funding women’s rights organisations. Setting this target has been made difficult by the inability to track current funding levels to women’s rights organisations. The figures have been calibrated against peer donors (Canada, which has announced a CAD30 million investment per annum for women’s rights
organisations; Sweden, which allocates USD86 million to women’s equality organisations and institutions; and the Netherlands, which allocates USD112 million to women’s equality organisations and institutions).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding to women’s rights organisations</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USD20 million</td>
<td>$30 million</td>
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This call to increase funding for women’s rights organisations has been supported by almost 4000 individuals who endorsed IWDA’s advocacy on this during March 2018.

**Women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights**

After sharp reductions in funding for family planning, the 2016-17 budget saw an increase inching close to the levels of 2014-15. Funding for the United Nations Population Fund has remained constant at $9.2 million a year since the 2015-16 Budget. This represents almost half of the Australian Government’s allocations between FY11/12 and FY14/15 ($15.4 million a year).

In 2016-2017 DFAT spent $2.07 billion on work that targeted gender equality as a principal or significant objective. The budget this year continues the $55 million commitment to the Gender Equality Fund.

The recent spike does not include the pledges made in 2017, including: $US 30 million over four years to support the sexual and reproductive health programming of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the Pacific; a new $US 3 million program to develop innovative approaches to accelerate access to and demand for contraceptives in the Pacific; $US 3.5 million to support UNFPA supplies.

The 2018-19 Budget papers mention Australian support for seven sexual and reproductive rights
programs in our region, which may include a 2017 commitment of $2.5 million for crisis-affected people in Myanmar.

IWDA, CARE and ACFID recommend an increase to family planning to $AU 50 million per year. This would bring funding for family planning in line with the commitment made by the Australian Government at the Family Planning 2020 Summit in 2012.

**Integration of gender across foreign affairs and trade**

*The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy* defines gender equality and women’s empowerment as a priority in Australia’s foreign policy and economic diplomacy as well as our development policy. It positions the promotion of gender equality as ‘integral to advancing Australia’s national interests’ (DFAT, 2016). It includes commitments to integrate gender equality into Australia’s foreign policy and to work with governments in countries where we work to drive progress on this.

To ensure that the Government is effectively driving progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment, every diplomatic post should report annually on its work to promote this agenda and the results it achieved. In addition, the Government should share the progress it has made on its *Women in Leadership Strategy* to increase the proportion of women in Band 1 and Band 2 positions to 40% and 35% respectively by 2018; and to 43% and 40% by 2020 (DFAT, 2015). As the DFAT cohort is due to grow over the next financial year, this greater investment in staff should reflect the prioritisation of gender equality within the organisation.

Noting its inability to offer a detailed analysis of the budget across the full portfolio, the ACFID Budget Submission called for a budget allocation to support Australia’s foreign affairs and trade portfolio to undertake systematic analysis of women’s rights within Australia’s trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties. As with the Foreign Policy White Paper, the integration of a gender analysis into trade agreements was not identified as a priority. Trade agreements affect women and men differently, and our trade policies, including aid for trade policies, need to take that into account.

There are strong, existing gender-impact assessment methodologies that have been used by counterparts in, for example, USAID, which could be used by the Australian Government to achieve a strong integration of gender equality outcomes into trade policies (Women’s Edge Coalition, 2003). These can be used both prior to the commencement of negotiations, to identify priority areas for negotiations (ie, to cast a gender lens over which sectors to include in negotiations) and also to monitor implementation to ensure there are no disproportionate impacts on women.
Accountability and Transparency

As noted earlier, analysis of budget measures, and more specifically the performance of the Australian Aid program, could be strengthened to improve transparency and accountability. The OECD have echoed this call, noting ‘the transparency of individual investments could be improved including through clear directives from management to publish regular and timely information. This would reinforce public accountability and confidence’ (OECD, 2018b, p 20).

While we welcome the release of the *Performance of Australian Aid, and Australia’s International Development Assistance: Official Sector Statistical Summary 2016-2017*, as the analysis we have presented in this Briefing Note shows, greater granularity, particularly at the country level is required, particularly given the under-performance against the gender equality target.

Recommendations

Recommendation 66

- NFAW recommends that the Government Reverse cuts to the development budget and recommit to reaching, in the first instance, 0.5% GNI; moving to 0.7% GNI, in-line with international targets.

Recommendation 67

- NFAW recommends that the Government Address the persistent inability to meet the gender equality performance target by
  
  d. Setting spending targets for principal and significant gender equality investments in the Australian Aid program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2020</th>
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<td>Significant investment (against DAC criteria)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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- Setting a standalone target for funding to women’s rights organisations

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding to women's rights organisations</td>
<td>$15 million</td>
<td>$20 million</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Introducing strategies to reduce the proportion of unscreened aid for gender equality objectives aid.
Recommendation 68

- NFAW recommends that the Government Strengthen the senior leadership accountability mechanisms for gender equality targets at DFAT, as per the Performance of Australian Aid 2016-2017 Report.

Recommendation 69

- NFAW recommends that the Government Strengthen public accountability and transparency approaches, including
  
  iv) the presentation by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of an Annual Gender Equality Report to Parliament
  v) the integration of gender equality spending targets and data into budget and public accountability documents
  vi) increasing in the country-by-country accountability for gender equality targets in the *Performance of Australian Aid* Report, particularly in the Pacific.

Recommendation 70

- NFAW recommends that the Government Increase family planning to $AU 50 million per year. This would bring funding for family planning in line with the commitment made by the previous Australian Government at the Family Planning 2020 Summit in 2012.

Recommendation 71

- NFAW recommends that the Government Fund Australia’s foreign affairs and trade portfolio to undertake systematic analysis of women’s rights within Australia’s trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties, and use management and public accountability mechanisms to ensure they are undertaken.

Recommendation 72

- NFAW recommends that the Government Ensure diplomatic posts report annually on their work to promote gender equality and the results they achieved. In addition, the Government should share the progress it has made on its *Women in Leadership Strategy* to increase the proportion of women in senior positions.

References


